

Picturing the Bronze Age

**Picturing the Bronze Age
(Swedish Rock Art, Book 3)
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Picturing the Bronze Age

Edited by
Peter Skoglund, Johan Ling and Ulf Bertilsson

SWEDISH ROCK ART SERIES: VOLUME 3

PICTURING THE BRONZE AGE

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Front cover: Catarina Bertilsson (Fig. 13.2) Three palstaves associated with cupmarks and foot images at
Järrestad, RAA 13, Scania.

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The Swedish Rock Art Research Archives and Picturing the Bronze Age – an introduction

Johan Ling, Peter Skoglund and Ulf Bertilsson

The Swedish Rock Art Research Archives (SHFA) was established in 2006 as an infrastructure to further documentation and research on Swedish rock art. The archive strives to store and present the existing rock art documentation for public access and for research. It has developed into a national archive at the University of Gothenburg, largely funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (an independent foundation funded by the Swedish Central Bank), and from contributions made by the Swedish National Heritage Board's 'Forskning och Utveckling' ('FoU', which translates as Research and Development) and the Swedish Research Council. The funding was dedicated to the construction and establishment of a new database for all rock art research, thus allowing for a new online infrastructure of rock art documentation that could be accessed worldwide.

The initiative was undertaken as a consequence of the strong tradition of rock art documentation in Sweden and the other Nordic countries. As far back in history as 1627 the famous rock art 'Skomakaren' at the Backa in Brastad site in Bohuslän (at that time belonging to Norway, but since 1658 in Sweden), was documented and depicted by the Norwegian priest Peder Alfssön. During the seventeenth century a Swedish national survey ('Rannsakingarna') took place, and the rock arts at Boglösa (Enköping) and Glösa (Jämtland) were documented and depicted. Two centuries later, in the nineteenth century, the curious rock arts in Bohuslän were subject to a widespread documentation campaign. Thanks to this, there is already a large quantity of valuable documentation available. In this particular collection there are more than 100,000 documents, ranging from depictions made on paper, rubbings ("frottage"), tracings on plastic sheets, and castings, to photographs, maps, and descriptions.

Since 2007 the Swedish Rock Art Research Archives has undertaken an extensive survey of rock art documentation collected in museums, by researchers and scholars, and in private collections, totalling approximately 80 institutions to this date. The material is scanned and registered in "SHFA Archive" and images are

added to the image database “SHFA Images”. Already a large amount of material deriving from a variety of institutions has been digitalised. By January 2015, digital files amounted to about 120,000 of which 11,000 have now been made publicly available online at www.shfa.se. There is also information available in English.

The infrastructure includes the website with image archive, database, and other rock art information, and also links to the Swedish National Heritage Board’s Archaeological Sites and Monuments database (FMIS) with pertinent maps, and other search engines, e.g. *Samsök i Kringla*, *K-Samsök*, and *Europeana*. The latter are large search engines to which both national and international institutions link. Additional maps are available including *Eniro* and *Google Maps*. Since its beginning, the web portal has had approximately 130,000 visitors yearly.

The Swedish National Data Service (SND) of the University of Gothenburg guarantees long-term storage and availability of the information in SHFA’s database and systems.

In 2011, as a direct result of SHFA’s activities, and thanks to a grant from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and the Royal Swedish Academy for Letters, History, and Antiquities, SHFA could offer two 5-year positions as researcher. These positions were assigned, and their purpose is to strengthen rock art research on a long-term basis.

SHFA is also a research institute promoting research on rock art in Scandinavia and beyond. The archive is editing the Swedish Rock Art Research Series aiming to present research on Scandinavian rock art to an international audience. An initiative to facilitate and strengthen this process is to arrange international symposia targeting Bronze Age imagery under the name *Picturing the Bronze Age*.

The current volume, which is No. 3 in the series, is the outcome of the first international symposium under this heading held in Tanum, Sweden, on 4–6 October 2012. The name was chosen to put a focus on the Bronze Age as a period holding a very complex and well-preserved prehistoric imagery. Pictures from the Bronze Age are numerous, vivid and complex. There is no other prehistoric period that has produced such a wide range of images spanning from rock art to figurines to decoration on bronzes and gold.

During this symposium various aspects of the making and interpretation of Bronze Age images were discussed. Important themes included religion and performance, materiality, mobility, interaction, agency, gender and research history. These and many other topics are reflected in this publication that gathers 16 researchers from five different countries (UK, Italy, Spain, Denmark and Sweden).

Papers primarily occupied with research history are presented by *Ulf Bertilsson* and *Jarl Nordbladh*.

In his paper, *Ulf Bertilsson*, examines the formation process of the cultural heritage of rock carvings in Tanum, northern Bohuslän, Sweden. The study targets the period from the first depictions of rock art in the late eighteenth century until the publication of Oscar Almgren’s groundbreaking study *Hällristningar och Kultbruk* in 1927. This 135-year period constitutes the formative period of the study of rock art in Tanum. During this period the way in which the material was viewed evolved from it being regarded as strange curiosities of uncertain age explained by legend-related interpretations to an important body of archaeological

heritage that would become a central research area in the rapidly developing field of archaeological science.

Jarl Nordbladh highlights the importance of the work of Carl Georg Brunius. A significant body of archaeological research on petroglyphs did not develop until the last decade of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. It was in this period that Carl Georg Brunius was active, and became a prominent personality with an influence on contemporary colleagues at a time when professional archaeologists were very few. This paper touches on the social conditions of academic and antiquarian archaeology, which questions were asked, which answers were preferred and how the Scandinavian petroglyph material was linked to similar categories in other areas of the world. Regarding Brunius rock art studies, two themes are highlighted in this paper: the very high and reflexive quality of his field documents and the nature of his interpretative arguments.

Papers primarily focused on religion and performance are by *Richard Bradley*, *Louise Felding* and *Andrew Meirion Jones*.

In his paper *Richard Bradley* considers the problem that visual imagery of Bronze Age Scandinavia is to found in more than one medium. He compares the character and chronology of ancient rock art with that of decorated metalwork. Following the work of the cognitive anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse, he suggests that they were associated with two different ways of expressing and transmitting religious beliefs in the past. Each may have been employed by a different kind of society.

Louise Felding, examines Danish rock art from the Bronze Age in relation to its surrounding landscapes. She investigates the different media upon which the rock art appear as bedrock is non-existent in the main part of Denmark. A main conclusion is that rock carvings in different contexts engaged people in different ways. Rock carvings on boulders appeared in secluded landscape settings that required a local knowledge of the area, which could indicate individual worship. On the other hand, rock carvings in burial contexts or on bedrock were placed in an open landscape setting and, therefore, were more likely to have involved larger groups of people participating in burials and assemblies of ritual character, presumably to secure the world order and the power of the elite.

Andrew Meirion Jones discusses axe images at two sites in the Kilmartin region of Scotland. In contrast to the Scandinavian Bronze Age, these sites are some of the few with evidence for the depiction of metalwork in the British Bronze Age. Jones argues that these carvings are not portraits, images or symbols of axes, but that their significance is best understood as being related to the alchemical nature of metalworking in the earliest Bronze Age.

Papers primarily focused on agency and gender are provided by *Lynne Bevan*, *Ramon Fábregas Valcarce* and *Carlos Rodríguez-Rellán* and *Peter Skoglund*.

Lynne Bevan explores sexual imagery and gender identity in the rock art of Valcamonica, northern Italy and Bohuslän, southern Sweden and their potential for investigating contemporary social organisation, ritual and religion. Rock art from the two areas is compared and contrasted. An important theme in this paper is the concept of hypermasculinity as applied to Bronze Age carvings of male figures associated with phallic imagery and weapons. By using this concept Bevan opens up new perspectives on male images in rock art and their relations to female imageries.

Ramon Fábregas Valcarce and *Carlos Rodríguez-Rellán* argue that rock art may

have had a role as an active agent through which human groups negotiated their own identity and association with the surrounding space. The relationship between petroglyphs and landscape was a dialectic one, and a variety of factors could regulate access and the reading of the decorated panels, perhaps restricting these to certain individuals or sectors of a given community. Moreover, parallels in the rock art from other areas of Atlantic Europe may be just another example of the circulation along the seaways of goods, ideas and people, at least from the Early Neolithic.

Peter Skoglund explores and discusses Scandinavian rock art from an historical perspective. Drawing on evidence from south-east Scania in the Early Bronze Age, this paper argues that rock art primarily had an integrative function in rituals, exemplified by the axe representing a broader aspect of society. The material from northern Bohuslän dating to the Late Bronze Age points in another direction; by the use of various attributes attached to human images different social roles are expressed in a much more straightforward way. It is argued that this reflects a larger trend in Europe around 800 BC, when certain groups in society reinvented the tradition of using representations of humans in art to manifest aristocratic ideals.

Papers primarily focused on power, mobility, interaction and violence are presented by *Johan Ling* and *Mike Rowlands*, *Alberto Maretta*, *Umberto Sansoni*, *Andreas Toreld*, and *Manuel Santos-Estévez* and *Alejandro Güimil-Fariña*.

Johan Ling and *Mike Rowlands* argue that the south Scandinavian rock art tradition is a fusion of different processes. It was a legacy of the north Scandinavian rock art tradition in terms of the emphasis of animistic feature and the general need to aggregate or interact on a seasonal basis; but in the same time it was part of south Scandinavia's entanglement with metal and its relation to metal producing societies in central and southern Europe. A part of this process was the formation of new maritime institutions and a general need to enter and maintain 'international' networks and alliances that inspired the rock art tradition with a pan-European code of warriorhood and cosmology. The paper especially explores the ritual and transformative depictions of bulls and ships in the former 'seascape' of Bohuslän and its relation to influences both from the north and from the south.

By analysing similarities in techniques and figurative programmes between Alpine rock art and decorated objects *Alberto Marretta* concludes that there were links connecting artisans and rock art makers. Themes and forms were translated between different media and geographical areas. Similarities in style indicate links connecting the Alpine region, the Mediterranean and central Europe but, overall, pattern and styles were reinterpreted according to local traits. It is also noteworthy that a vast heritage of Bronze Age symbols were still thriving in the core ideology of Iron Age communities

Andreas Toreld discusses new discoveries of spectacular rock art images made during recent fieldwork in Brastad parish, Bohuslän. One valley revealed a particularly large number of violent motifs and of special interest is a killing scene and human figures that are indisputably wielding swords. These images were probably pecked into the rock during the Bronze Age Montelius periods II–III, i.e. 1500–1100 BC which make them rather unique in a comparative perspective. *Toreld* concludes that the discovery of these scenes provides new scope for

interpretation, specifically that scenes with figures engaged in combat might be accounts of real conflicts.

Umberto Sansoni studies and compares the rock art in south Scandinavia and Valcamonica, northern Italy. Based on an analysis of different categories of motifs this paper aims to provide an overview of these parallels and relate them to a cultural historical context. Some of the observed similarities may reflect a human tendency to represent basic archetypes, but others probably reflect cultural contacts across great distances. This conclusion is strengthened when we can observe similarities in the composition of particular scenes. Sansoni argues that the background to this phenomenon is the emergence of a similar kind of Bronze Age culture covering large parts of Europe. The rock art is a testimony of the complexity of these contacts.

Manuel Santos-Estévez and *Alejandro Güimil-Fariña* discuss the relations between rock art and the maritime environment in Galicia, Spain. In Galicia, most rock art panels with Atlantic-style motifs are located in the coastal region of the Rías Baixas and on mountainous sites situated not further than 30 km from the coastline. Through a combined analysis of geographical data and rock art distribution, it seems likely that one of the factors that influenced the location of the carvings was accessibility to the coast and navigation. Rock art is located on higher hills close to the coast, from where it would have been possible to control natural harbours of western bays and a large expanse of sea. By analysing the visibility and accessibility of rock art sites, they argue that it is possible to define a systematic relationship between rock art and navigation.

A major conclusion to be drawn from the symposium is the complexity of rock art in various parts of Europe and the need for a comparative perspective in order to picture the Bronze Age. By bringing together scholars from various parts of Europe and publishing the contributions in this volume we hope we have been able to demonstrate the potential for further research along these paths.

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From folk oddities and remarkable relics to scientific substratum: 135 years of changing perceptions on the rock carvings in Tanum, northern Bohuslän, Sweden

Ulf Bertilsson

*This study examines the formation process of the cultural heritage of the rock carvings in Tanum, northern Bohuslän, Sweden. In particular, it looks at the social and cultural forces that have combined and interacted over time to create the academic discourse relating to this material. The article includes a brief description of the most influential individuals, publications and events in this process from 1792 until Tanum was designated as a World Heritage site in 1994. The study targets the period from the first depiction of the Litsleby panel by Carl Gustaf Gottfried Hielfeling until the publication of Oscar Almgren's groundbreaking study *Hällristningar och Kultbruk* in 1927. This 135-year period constitutes the formative period of the study of rock art in Tanum. During this period the way the material was viewed evolved from being regarded as strange curiosities of uncertain age explained by legend-related interpretations to an important body of archaeological heritage that would become a central research area in the rapidly developing field of archaeological science.*

KEYWORDS Rock carvings, Tanum, cultural heritage, World Heritage, historiography, sea voyages, heroic deeds, folk oddities, remarkable relics, cult practices, religious-magical interpretation, scientific substratum

'If the Scandinavian antiquaries went further and faster than their European colleagues, it is because they could apply their knowledge to a much closer past, for which they sensed a formal continuity with the present' (Schnapp 1996: 150p).

Introduction

'From Ancient Remains for the Educated to Heritage for the Public and the World' is the title of a research project being undertaken by *Svenskt Hällristnings Forsknings Arkiv* – the Swedish Rock Art Research Archives at the Department of Historical Studies, University of Gothenburg. The aim of the project is to trace and describe the development of the processes of documentation and research from the first discovery of rock art in Tanum down to its present day status as a World Heritage property. By analysing how social, cultural and academic forces have interacted and changed over time, important aspects of the formation of cultural heritage will be illuminated and its interaction with the academic discourse can be analysed. This study will provide a brief description of some of the most influential individuals, publications and events in this process from 1792 until its designation as a World Heritage site in 1994.

In this first essay to emerge from the current project, the focus is on the period from 1792, when the first depiction of the Litsleby panel was made by the private antiquarian C. G. G. Hielfeling, until the publication of Oscar Almgren's groundbreaking study *Hällristningar och Kultbruk* in 1927. The first 135 years encompasses the formative period of rock art research, when it was recognised as something more than strange curiosities of uncertain age explained by popular names and fairytales or legend-related interpretations. During this period Tanum's petroglyphs were recorded in a series of systematic studies. The work was completed by scholars who also put great emphasis on the age of the rock carvings and their interpretation. Furthermore, the material became recognised as an important body of archaeological heritage that was gradually established and transformed into a field of research right in the middle of the fast developing field of archaeological science (Baudou 2004: 16). And it was during this period that the first overview and interpretation of the rock carvings based on comparative studies in archaeology, ethnology, history of religion and anthropology was presented.

The first official report documenting rock art was conducted at the Litsleby panel, starting a process that gradually enhanced the status of the rock carvings in Tanum and northern Bohuslän so that they would be recognised as an important source material upon the establishment of Swedish archaeology as a formal discipline, eventually being recognised as a scientific substratum. This illustrates, in an interesting way, an evolution of the perception of the rock carvings from folk oddities, through strange antiques to official monuments. This was a general process within archaeology that, in some cases, started earlier in other European countries, but unfolded in an almost explosive progression in Scandinavia in the 1800s (Schnapp 1996: 303pp; Gräslund 1987: 117p).

Early beginnings: Peder Alfsön

The first records of any of the currently known tens of thousands of images inscribed in the Bohuslän (mainly granite) rock surfaces took place almost 400 years ago, in 1627. It was in this year that the Norwegian doctor and lector, Peder Alfsön, recorded a couple of rock carvings at Backa in Brastad by ink drawings painted with watercolours (Fig. 2.1). This episode has become famous and is probably the most written about instance of rock art recording in Sweden

(Ohlmarks 1966: 22, 32pp with references), although the area where the actual panel is located belonged to Norway at that time. Regardless of the later fame of Alfsön's documentation it did not represent a sustained interest in the subject, or trigger any further studies at the time. Thus, it cannot be considered 'the birth of rock art research', but was just an isolated event, a one-off incident, or like someone taking photographs to remember a special experience from a journey. This is also apparent from the fact that the drawings were not published until almost 150 years later, in 1784, by the Danish historian Peter Frederik Suhm. However, since this event has been referred to so often, it has become a landmark in the history of rock art research, an integral part of an historical sequence and its descriptions and narratives.

One final note on Peder Alfsön is that he had an important characteristic in common with some of his followers in the 1800s, C. G. Brunius and A. E. Holmberg: the academic education. Through his training and education he had the ability to perceive the images carved on granite outcrops in Bohuslän as traces of a culture other than contemporary. In Alfsön's case the perception of how and when the pictures were created and what they represented was still rather unclear. This is demonstrated by the fact that he depicted the obviously large male image 'The Shoemaker' at Backa as a woman with the help of imagination mixed with a portion of wishful thinking. This may seem strange – and disturbing – when we consider the fact that Alfsön was a trained physician. In contrast, the connection to the priesthood and the Church that influenced Brunius and Holmberg in their work on the rock carvings ensured accuracy in the details, although to some extent preconceived opinions about the images they observed were still mixed in.

Thus, Alfsön's four watercolours became an important reference for all the great rock art documenters of the nineteenth century: Brunius, Holmberg and Baltzer. The depictions have actually also inspired a study that, among other interesting things, reveals that the oldest rock carving ever recorded in Sweden is the so-called *Wälfers sten* with two cup marks on it, in Långlöt on the island of Öland, drawn in ink by Johan Rhezelius in 1634. Rhezelius also recorded some other rock carvings on his mission that included parts of Småland (Goldhahn 2011). This leaves us with the fact that Backa in Brastad is the oldest rock carving recorded in Sweden; however, it is not the oldest Swedish rock carving since Bohuslän belonged to Norway at the time of its discovery. What these political divisions may have looked like in the Bronze Age is impossible to say.



Fig. 2.1. Watercolour imaging of rock carving at Backa in Brastad made of Norwegian Peder Alfson in 1627. This was the first depiction ever of a rock carving in Scandinavia. The original is now kept in the Arnamagneic collections at Copenhagen University. (Source: SHFA_id1425).

The pioneer documentalist: Carl Gustaf Gottfried Hilfeling

Today, Tanum and its rock carvings have evolved into a centre for documentation and research. This has been a long process, started more than 200 years ago, and is still ongoing. It is not possible to pinpoint the exact moment in time when it started, but there are some important events that seem to have triggered the

commencement of research in this field. The first was the recording of the magnificent rock carving at Litsleby often referred to as ‘the Spear God’, and thought by some to depict the almighty Iron Age God, Oden (Fig. 2.2). This event took place in 1792. Then petty officer Carl Gustaf Gottfried Hifseling was sent on a drawing mission to Bohuslän by his master, the aristocrat Per Tham, for whom he served as a private antiquarian (Nordbladh 1997 and this volume).

In Tanum he made an ink drawing of the ‘Giant Fighter’, which became the first official recording of a rock carving there. It appears that Hifseling’s work at Litsleby was much more precise and accurate than Alfsön’s documentation of rock carvings at Backa. A key difference, aside from the century and a half that separated them, was that Hifseling was a trained draftsman. He was also an experienced antiquarian operating during the dynamic development phase of the antiquarian business field at the end of the eighteenth century (Nordbladh 1997: 534).



Fig. 2.2. Indian ink drawing of the rock carving at Litsleby in Tanum, Bohuslän made by Carl Gustaf Gottfried Hifseling in 1792. This is the first depiction ever of a rock carving in Tanum. The original is kept in ATA, Swedish National Heritage Board in Stockholm. (Source: Hifselings’ field notebook).

Hifseling’s missions were not authorised by the Crown in Denmark or Sweden, and it is evident that stately claims to the results were still rather restricted, this time being initiated by a culturally ambitious regional magnate. During his visit in

Tanum, Hielfeling also made ink drawings of two additional rock carvings, one in Ryland's outlying land and one at the vicarage plot west of the church, as well as depictions of some other prominent prehistoric monuments such as the dolmen close to Tanum church and the passage grave *Ludesten* at Säm (Almgren, O. 1912: 474; Frödin 1906: 448). In retrospect, Hielfeling's fieldwork in Tanum can be seen as the starting point of a new era. New forces and bodies emanating from 'the outside' stated that the rock carving at Litsleby represented a phenomenon so important that it could not be recorded or understood only by locals. Such a momentous task had to be undertaken by professionally trained, enlightened and educated people such as Hielfeling.

This attitude was probably related to the fact that, some 40 years before Hielfeling, the Litsleby carving was described by a Swedish official, Colonel Klinkowström, in a letter to the famous Carl Gustaf Tessin who, at the time, was President of the Royal Office, as '...a carved man with a spear in his hand, representing a Scottish commander in a military campaign that in the old time was beaten and in the position he was found carved into the rock' (Ohlmarks 1966: 78 translated here). It is apparent that this was not the colonel's own perception and interpretation of the huge carved figure. It appears that he recounted the popular perception of the mighty spear-carrier, which then flourished in the area. Actually, in his letter the colonel asks Tessin to search for and identify Bohuslän's ancient monuments (Swedish '*eftersökas och utpekñas*', Montelius 1874: 149). Here we can sense the first hint of an official claim from the state on the rock carvings in northern Bohuslän.

The breakthrough of the academic approach: Carl Georg Brunius and Axel Emmanuel Holmberg

The next figure to continue the emerging task of identifying and recording rock art in Tanum was to be Carl Georg Brunius (Fig. 2.3), born in 1792, the son of the vicar in Tanum. His father, Gomer Brunius, a dynamic man of many talents, was a well-known innovator in agricultural methods and building techniques, and it was inevitable that his son would be well educated. And, indeed, an academic he became.

Brunius first studied in Uppsala, then received his degree in Lund in 1814, where he was appointed professor in Greek ten years later, becoming the predecessor of the famous poet and clergyman Esaias Tegnér. More than a quarter of a century later, in 1853, his career peaked when he was elected member of the *Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien*. His interest in archaeology and rock carvings was in fact exercised in his early years, and mainly between in years 1815–1817. During these years he conducted several important excavations in Tanum, one of the Bronze Age cairn *Galgeröset* and another of the Roman Iron Age cemetery at Gerum, with important finds of bronze artefacts and of Roman glass (cf. Jarl Nordbladh's paper in this volume with references). However, his most extensive field project was to record rock carvings. In that respect, he was a pioneer, and at this point in time his work in this area was the most extensive yet. The results had a long-lasting influence on rock art documentation in Tanum. In total, Brunius recorded more than 100 panels, in each case using a grid to measure so that the placement of the engraved images was accurate and to the scale of the actual

depictions (Figs 2.4 and 2.5).



Fig. 2.3. Woodcut of Professor Carl Georg Brunius dressed with awards at the height of his academic career. (Source: <http://Projectruneberg.org/samtid/0027.html>).

Due to other commitments, Brunius' book on the rock art, including his attempted explanations of the rock carvings – *Försök till förklaringar öfver Hällristningar* (Brunius 1868) – was not to be published until the year before his death in 1869. The fact that it only presented 15 posters of the more than 100 rock carvings he actually documented, resulted in limited attention. Also problematic was the fact that almost 50 years had elapsed between his fieldwork and the publication of his book. As a result, Brunius' ideas and theories were sharply questioned and were considered controversial. Actually, the polemics started even long before the publication of his concluding book. The first to question Brunius'

theory of the age of the rock carving was Lennart Åberg (1842), an academic born in Uddevalla. The criticism mainly concerned the question of what kind of tools had been used to fabricate the petroglyphs; according to Brunius it was obvious that they were cut using stone tools and consequently must be dated to the Stone Age. This opinion he expressed many times, e.g. in the report from his antiquarian trip to western Sweden that took place in 1835 (Ohlmarks 1966: 8–9).



Fig. 2.4. Depiction of the Litsleby rock carving made by Carl Georg Brunius in c. 1815, but not published until 1868. (Source: SHFA_id 156).



Fig. 2.5. Colour photograph of the Litsleby rock carving in 2002, now filled with red paint and fitted with a wooden ramp for visitors. Photo: Catarina Bertilsson. (Source: SHFA_id 1449).

His main opponent was, however, to be Axel Emmanuel Holmberg (Fig. 2.6), who, like Brunius' father, was a priest (the curate in Naverstad in Bullaren) for a few years. Holmberg, in his thesis presented in 1848, postulated that, based on the technique used to make the engravings, and the weapons and tools being depicted on the rocks in Bohuslän and, with few exceptions, in the Nordic countries, the petroglyphs were evidently made with iron tools (Holmberg 1848: 9). On that basis, and the further strengthening circumstance that all Christian allusions were missing, including a thorough and lengthy analyses of which people – according to him *Norraenafolket* or *Nordmannastammen* – had fabricated the rock carvings, he dated them to the period between AD 500 and 900. As a consequence, Holmberg considered the rock carvings to be descriptions of the deeds from the most glorious days of the Vikings (Holmberg 1848: 16–21). Compared with Brunius' fluent and elegant academic writing, Holmberg's language could easily be perceived as tedious, polemical and overloaded with subordinate clauses. Johan Ling, in his thesis, presents a condensed but excellent description of the conflict and the different arguments put forward by both Brunius and Holmberg (Ling 2008: 20–21).



Fig. 2.6. Dry point of Axel Emanuel Holmberg in *Svenska Familjejournalen* 1877. (Source: Wikipedia, Author: Sven Rosborn).

Regardless of Holmberg's conclusions, Brunius, at the end of his career, still advocated the dating to the Stone Age:

'We have seen that the rock carvings are undoubtedly carved and polished into the rock face with the stone shards. It then follows that these plaques derived from the Stone Age, so they must be very old. Holmberg, who has the opposite view, denies the possibility of using only stone tools to prepare equally sizable and trim ships as those shown on our petroglyphs. The possibility of this should not be doubted, as the savages on the South Sea Islands with nothing but stone and bone tools made larger and trimmer boats than any of the canoes, depicted here' (Brunius 1868: 152, translated here).

One reason for not publishing his book in Swedish until 1868 was that Brunius, prior to that, had made a serious attempt to get his original drawings and text published in Paris by the French Academy. However, he never succeeded in that ambitious and daring task (Almgren 1912: 474). Today, more than 150 years later,

his major opus has remained unpublished. In recent years Jarl Nordbladh has taken on the challenge to complete the task. Hopefully, that will take place in connection with the 200-year anniversary of Brunius' field campaign in 2015 (Nordbladh, pers. comm. and this volume).

Brunius also made the interesting observation that the rock carvings had been made at natural harbours, and with few exceptions had been manufactured on coastal rocks that, after a long succession of centuries, must have achieved its present altitude (Brunius 1868: 151). This observation seems to be the first to use the observed altitude of the rock carvings as an argument for their antiquity. For a long time this phenomenon was overlooked in rock art research, until it was reintroduced by Göran Burenhult (1980; 1981) and examined in my own dissertation (Bertilsson 1987). Since then it has become central in the modern rock art chronology based on a methodological approach of ship typology (Kaul 1998; 2003) and the testing of that by linking in to the satellite referred measurements of the height above the present level of the sea of the rock art panels (Ling 2006; 2008).

Solving the riddle of the age of the rock carvings: Oscar Montelius

Oscar Montelius (Fig. 2.7), one of the most prominent archaeological researchers of all times in Sweden and in Europe, conducted fieldwork in Tanum in the 1870s, although only a minor, but important, portion of it concerned rock carvings (Montelius 1874). Nevertheless, in a speech at the archaeological congress in Stockholm in 1874, he presented a series of arguments to support his new theory of the dating of the rock carvings to the Bronze Age, citing:

‘... a general difference in the manner of depicting humans and animals between the rock carvings and the rune-stones; the images of the rock carvings are generally carved out whilst those of the rune-stones are generally contoured; the different shapes of the swords; the different stems and sterns on the ships of the rock carvings in contrast to the similar stems and sterns of the Iron Age ships; the absence of runes on the rock carvings’ (cited by Rydberg 1881 and Ohlmarks 1966: 9, translated here).

In order to strengthen his theory further, Montelius also brought forward the argument that ‘... the only known religious symbol in the Bronze Age was the wheel that was supplanted by the swastika in the Iron Age’.



Fig. 2.7. G. Oscar A. Montelius in his 50s c. 1890. (Source: ATA, Swedish National Heritage Board in Stockholm).

While the first five arguments are logically well-constructed and still valid to a certain degree even today, the sixth and last has a certain character of circular reasoning, but still, considering the state of knowledge at that time, made perfect

sense. Montelius not only argued a general dating of the rock carvings to the Bronze Age, but specifically to the Early Bronze Age.

It is interesting to observe that, when discussing the dating of the rock carvings, Montelius strictly used arguments generating exclusively from the archaeological record and not from other disciplines like ethnography or the Nordic sagas. His way of reasoning stands in sharp contrast to most of his predecessors, who used a mix of arguments from those different sources in combination with the technological argument of the fabrication with stone or metal tools (Fig. 2.8). Holmberg's reasoning in particular has a certain air of pseudo-science when considered today with the mixing of the sources of the arguments, although, even in his time his ideas were considered to be somewhat odd. Although Brunius' argumentation may appear to be a little more solid, it is obvious that the use of the technological argument alone was not enough to solve the problem of the dating of the rock carvings even though it seemed logical at that time. According to Åke Ohlmarks, Holmberg's depictions of the rock carvings constituted a radical improvement in accuracy (Ohlmarks 1966: 7). This does seem to be a highly questionable assertion, though! Regarding Brunius' dating of the rock carvings to the Stone Age, Montelius makes the important observation that it 'was written shortly after that proposal of the three major prehistoric periods incurred the public's attention, and simultaneously with the publication of Professor Sven Nilsson's classic work on the Stone Age.' (Montelius 1874: 151, translated here). The understated implication is that Brunius' dating suggestion was influenced by both those factors and therefore could be excused.

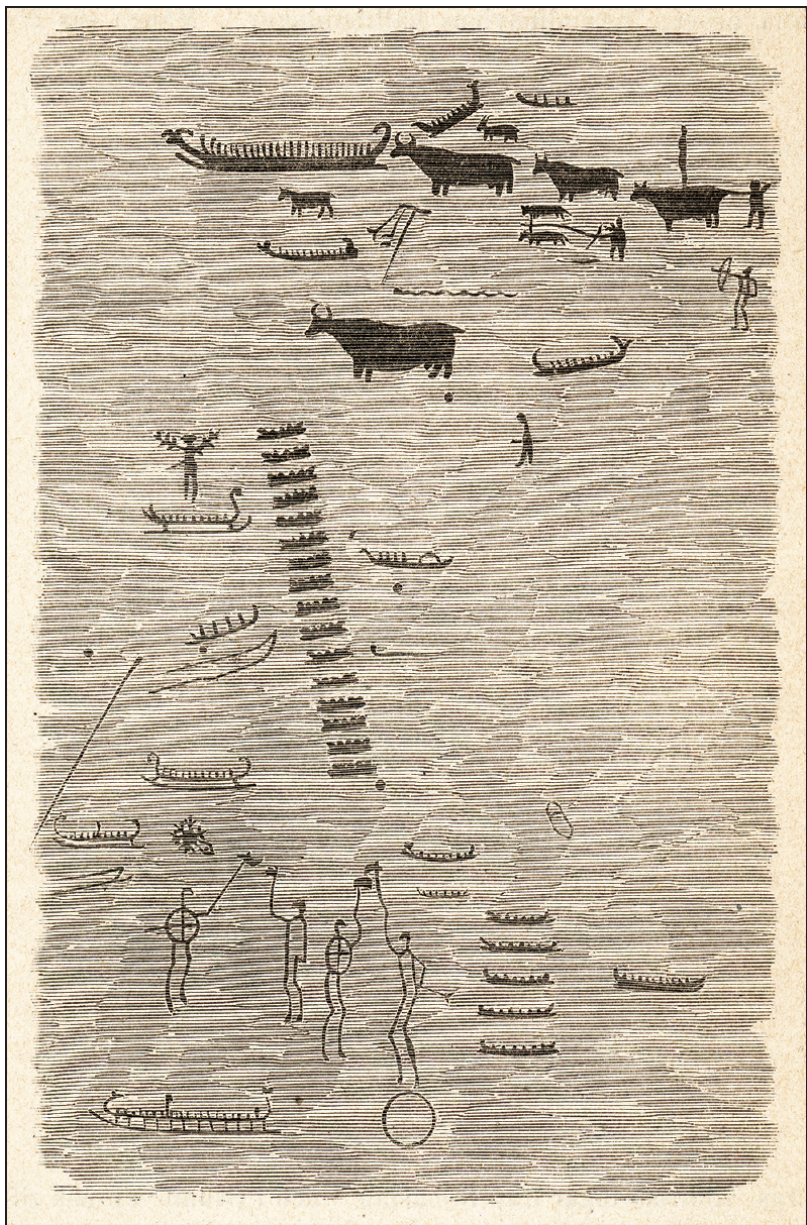


Fig. 2.8. Graphic printing of the rock carving at Aspeberget, Tegneby in Tanum, Bohuslän published by Oscar Montelius in his paper on rock carvings in Bohuslän (Montelius 1874: 25, fig. 42). In this paper Montelius expresses some criticism of the effigies of rock carvings in Holmberg's book 'Skandinaviens Hällristningar'.

deri bevarat forntidens konst. Vi behöfva endast jemföra ofvannämnda landskaps hållristningar med afteckningar från den ryktbara Kiviksgravnen i Skåne, och åter dermed sammanlikna de prydnader, hvarmed närstående bronzknif,



funnen uti en grafurna från Möen, är utsirad, för att finna en påtaglig likhet mellan sinsemellan aflägsna orters fornteckningar under säkert samma tidsålder.

Fig. 2.9. Drawing of engraved Bronze Age razor found in a sepulchral urn from Möen in Denmark. Although Åberg, in this section of his text, points out the striking similarity between mutually different localities with rock carvings and that they certainly was made during the same era it does not affect his dating of the rock carvings to the Iron Age (Åberg 1842: 349).

The first step towards a more precise dating of the rock carvings had actually already been taken by Lennart Åberg when he compared the ship images of the rock carvings with those engraved onto a bronze razor (Fig. 2.9) decorated with an engraved ship and a fish looking like a coelacanth found in a burial urn excavated from a mound on the island of Möen (Åberg 1842: 349 and 353).

This was actually the same method that Bror Emil Hildebrand used some 30 years later when he postulated that the swords carved on the panels at Ekenberg in Östergötland were all of indisputable Bronze Age type (Fig. 2.10; see further discussion below). The crucial difference, however, was that Åberg did not draw the now obvious conclusion that the rock carvings should therefore be dated to the Bronze Age. Instead, he argued that they should be dated to the Iron Age, with references to Tacitus – approximately to AD 100, Sidonius Apollinarius – to the end of the fifth century AD, and Snorre Sturlarsson – to the Viking Age. The purpose of this analysis was to present arguments in his dating controversy with Brunius (Åberg 1842: 351–353; Ling 2008: 22). Ohlmarks claimed, albeit wrongly, that Åberg actually stated that rock art should be dated to the Bronze Age (Ohlmarks 1966: 9).

Montelius was the first to use a broader range of arguments emanating from his own observations, or those of his fellow researchers, about the archaeological source material. In doing so, he established a more complex and scientific approach to the study of rock carvings. A new and clever argument was that of ‘the absence of runes on the rock carvings’. Even though there are actually a few examples of rock carving images with runes on the same panel, this argument still holds true.

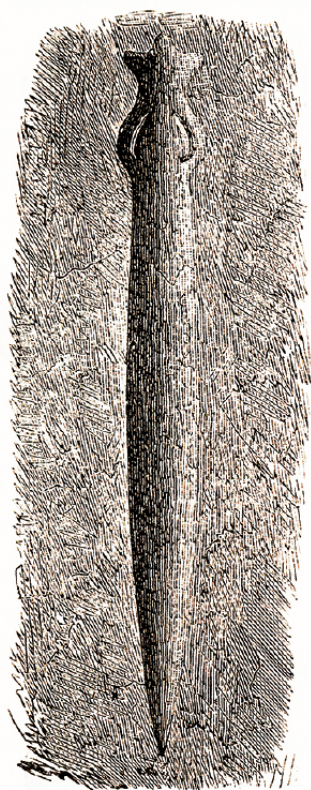


Fig. 1. Svärd; hållristning.

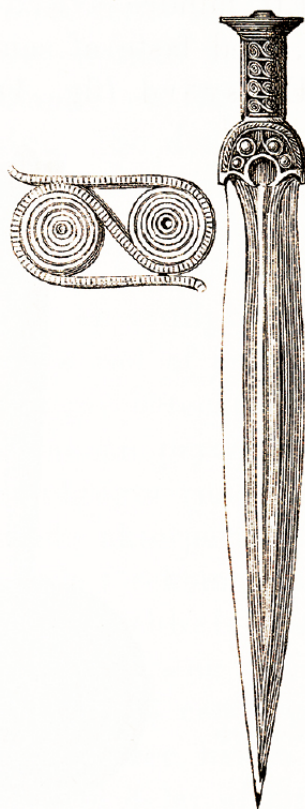


Fig. 2. Bronzsvärd i Stockh. Museum.

Fig. 2.10. Depiction of a Bronze Age sword on the rock carving at Ekenberg in Norrköping, Östergötland and of a Bronze Age sword of a similar type in the collections of the Historical Museum in Stockholm (Hildebrand 1869).

In contrast to the quite heated debate on the age of the carved images between Holmberg and Brunius, Montelius wrote in a more courteous and urbane manner that avoided polemical elements (Fig. 2.11). This tendency for even-handedness was equally evident in other conflicts, such as regarding the new ancient monuments protection law (Goldhahn 2012: 209). He was, however, critical of one of Holmberg's depictions of an axe on the Vitlycke rock carving that, judging from the imaging, seems to represent an iron axe, but which, according to Montelius, in fact represented a common stone axe (Fig. 2.12).

It is also here that Montelius refers to Bror Emil Hildebrand's findings that the newly discovered depictions of swords at Ekenberg were similar to the real Bronze Age weapons to the extent that these rock carvings must have been made during the same archaeological period (Montelius 1874: 159p).

In his comparative analysis of the swords (Fig 2.13), Hildebrand himself reaches

the conclusion that, together with shields and coils, they could only belong to one and the same period. He further notes that the correspondence between the details and the big picture makes it obvious that the carvings in Bohuslän and the Östergötland rocks must belong to the same time. Despite this breakthrough discovery, Hildebrand himself remained ambivalent about the general dating of the rock carvings. In fact, he tended to agree with Brunius' opinion that they belonged to the Stone Age:

'Should I choose between these two extremes, I must, because of the complaints, I above have directed against Holmberg's opinion, consider it more correct to attribute the petroglyphs to the Stone Age than the Iron Age. Well, I cannot assess with certainty, how far Brunius is correct in his assertion that such carvings have been carried out using only stone tools. But I think it is very likely, as it is commonly known by the extraordinary skill with which Stone Age people worked the hard flint and drilled holes through the axes of diorite and other hard stones. The statement Mr Brunius has provided has also been confirmed in a convincing manner by a particular experiment' (Hildebrand 1869: 430–431 with reference, translated here).

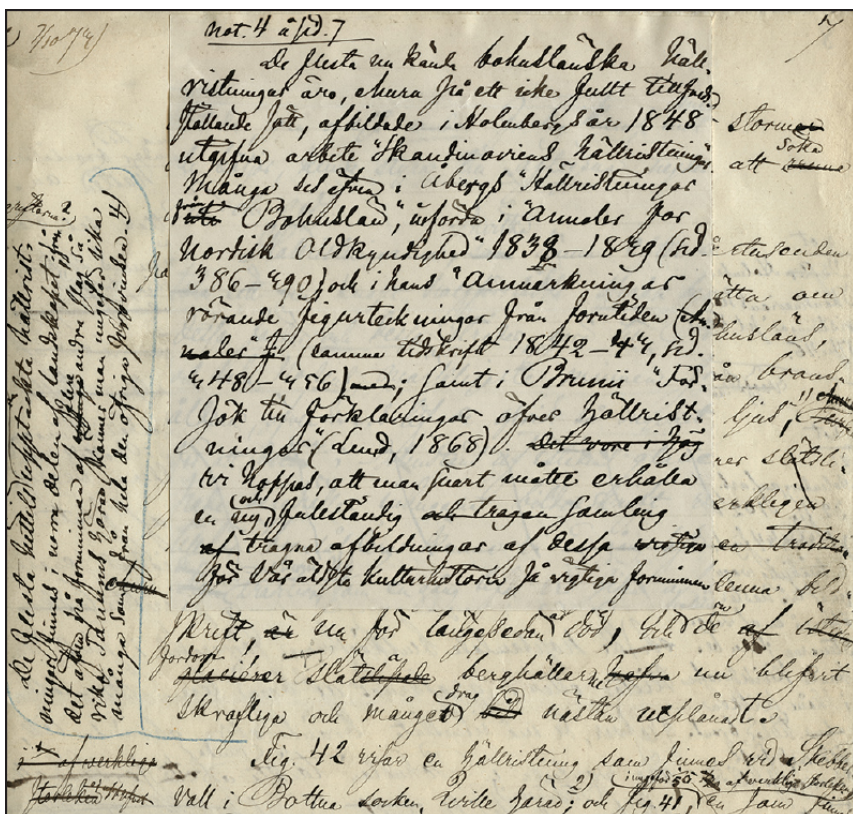


Fig. 2.11. In a footnote to his original handwritten manuscript to his article on the Bohuslän rock carvings in 1874 Oscar Montelius commented on the quality of the documentations made so far: 'Most of the known Bohuslän rock art is, although in a non fully satisfactory manner depicted in Holmberg's 1848 published work "Skandinavians hällristningar". Many also in Åberg's

“Hällristningar från Bohuslän” ... and in Brunius’ “Försök till förklaringar över hällristningar” ... We hope that soon we might receive a new and complete collection meticulous reproductions of these, for our oldest cultural history, such important antiquities.’ (Montelius 1874, translated here).

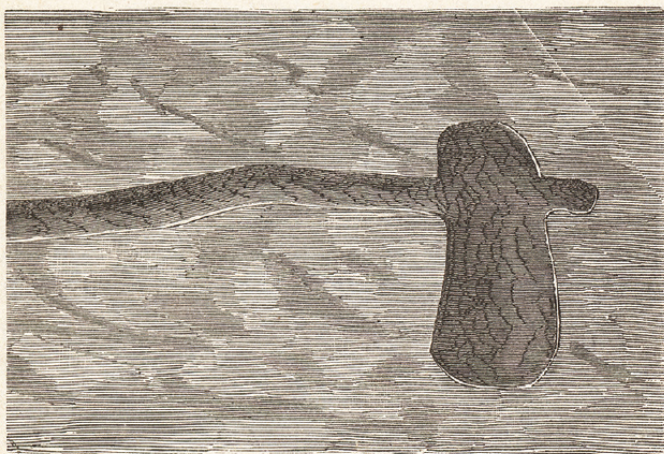


Fig. 3. Yxa med skaft, å en hällristning vid Heitlycke i Tanums socken; tecknad efter pappersaftryck.

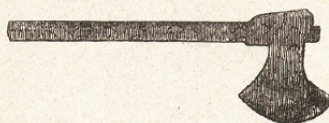


Fig. 4. Samma yxa som fig. 3; efter Holmbergs teckning.

Fig. 2.12. Graphic printing of the stone axe on the Vitlycke rock carving by Montelius that Holmberg earlier has depicted to be an iron axe (Montelius 1874).



Fig. 2.13. This metal hilted short sword dated to Montelius’ 2nd period of the Bronze Age is the sword in the collections of the Swedish History Museum that Hildebrand referenced and illustrated in his article on the then newly discovered carvings at Ekenberg in Norrköping in 1869. The sword was found in a peat bog in 1843. (FID 96951 Filid 369977 Svärd; Segerstad sn; Vg; Inv. nr. 1054. Photo: Bertha Amaya SHMM).

So even though Hildebrand's discovery and interpretation of the swords on the rock panel at Ekenberg lead to a new and united thinking in the discourse of dating the rock art to the Bronze Age (Ling 2008: 23), he himself, the initiator of the process, had severe doubts about its accuracy!

The arguments for a more flexible dating: Viktor Rydberg

Only a few years later, in 1881, in the preface to the Baltzer large illustrated works that is commented upon below, the famous author Viktor Rydberg (Fig. 2.14) introduced the theory that the rock carvings could be dated even more precisely to the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. In this text, he also includes some mild attacks against Montelius' opinion. Here Rydberg, the very prominent writer that he was, appears at least as scientific in his analytical reasoning as the acclaimed rock art researchers in the 1800s. After examining the six different arguments that Montelius highlights concerning the age of the rock carvings (see above), he concludes that '... they belong either to the Bronze Age or Iron Age oldest centuries, or a time period, which covers parts of both' (Rydberg 1881: 7, translated here).



Fig. 2.14. The acclaimed author, journalist, lecturer and prominent liberal Viktor Rydberg photographed at the age of 48 years in 1876. (Source: Wikipedia.Org).

At the same time, Rydberg argued against Brunius' symbol-related interpretations. According to Rydberg, Brunius failed to interpret figures in the images as emblematic characters. For Brunius the ox meant strength, a hare: fear,

birds: foreboding, and snakes meant slyness and death, with cup marks symbolising inverted barrows (cf. Montelius 1874: 150 and 152). Clearly, however, Rydberg picked these counterarguments against Brunius from Åberg: ‘... and requiring more spiritual maturity than the roughness which a Savage possesses in a symbolic picture writing whereby oxen convey a notion of strength, hares fear, serpents cunning, birds lucky or unlucky omen, etc.’ (Åberg 1842: 353, translated here).

Rydberg’s dating proposal was slowly but steadily accepted among the established archaeologists during the course of the nineteenth century. However, this issue gradually became of less importance, since many of the successors of Montelius and Rydberg shifted the focus from the dating to the interpretation and meaning of the rock art. This almost century-long new period started with the debate between Gunnar Ekholm and Oskar Almgren on the issue of the rock carvings being the result of beliefs and actions in the cult of death or that of fertility, which ran in the early part of the 1900s (Ekholm 1916; 1922; Almgren, O. 1927). Actually, it was not until the last decade or so that the focus has shifted back to the dating issue, among the first to do so being Oskar Almgren’s son, Bertil Almgren, who also holds the professor’s chair in Uppsala. As a result of his analyses of style in the design of the ships on the rock carvings in Bohuslän and Scania, he demonstrated that many of the depictions had been carved in the Early Bronze Age (Almgren, B. 1987). More recent studies based on ship typology by Flemming Kaul (1998; 2003) and Johan Ling (2006; 2008) present chronological schemes built on different ship types. Ling has also tested the proposed chronology using modern and independent shoreline displacement studies, the result of which seems to have confirmed his hypothesis.

Rydberg argued further that a careful comparative study of the rock carvings, when they occur in completely reliable depictions and mappings, would shed much light on an era that is far beyond all historical accounts, even if one would never succeed in finding the key to a comprehensive interpretation of the carvings. He touches here upon the main reason behind Baltzer’s documentation project: that a more complete and reliable catalogue would enable scientists to better comprehend and interpret the rock carvings. This argument remains valid and is in fact a perfect description of a classic scientific research process with three stages: observation, analysis and interpretation. It illustrates in an obvious way that the study of rock art in Bohuslän had finally entered into the scientific era during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. One interesting fact is that the two people who were of vital importance for this process, namely the renowned archaeologist Oscar Montelius and the celebrated author Viktor Rydberg, were two of the then leading liberal personalities (Baudou 2012a: 193). In a later stage of life, which coincided with the First World War, Montelius seems to have adopted a more conservative outlook generally, reflecting the prevailing view of the time (Baudou 2012b; Goldhahn 2012: 206). Moreover, Rydberg was also a member of the Board of the University of Stockholm when the delicate matter of Montelius’ appointment as professor was dealt with in 1887 (Baudou 2012b: 260pp).

The documentation assignment completed: Lauritz Baltzer

In 1874, Lauritz Baltzer started to conduct the first comprehensive recording of

Bohuslän's rock art and this resulted in the illustrated works that were published in two parts (1881–1890 and 1891–1908). His books became the foundation and reference for all research and documentation of rock art until the 1980s. Baltzer was a Danish art teacher working in Gothenburg. His client was the Agricultural Society, and the funds came from profits from liquor sales (Bertilsson and Winberg 1978: 98). Originally calculated to last some ten years, he came to devote close to 35 years of his life to this extensive work. Baltzer managed to accomplish a record not only of all the carvings that were known when his mission started, but, like his predecessors Brunius and Holmberg, he also managed to add a considerable number of rock carvings that he himself discovered. The number gradually increased due to the frequent discoveries in the course of documenting the known examples. It was not only the carved images that were noted, but also any damage to the rock surface.

Simultaneously, there was also a development of the techniques that were used to document the carved images. Brunius, being influenced by Hilfeling, was the first to systematically use a grid system when drawing the engraved images. But Baltzer was the true pioneer in developing the system with a systematic reduction of the images made to scale using a grid and tablets directly in the field and by conducting all the different steps of the documentation on site and in the later publication process himself (Nordbladh 1981: G68). The consistency and durability of his depiction techniques is demonstrated by the fact that the county antiquarian, Ake Fredsjö, still utilised them in his fieldwork in Kville almost half a century later. However, Fredsjö implemented an important addition in that he also systematically photographed the carvings. For a good overview of the development and history of the documentation and publication processes of rock art in Bohuslän it is useful to read Jarl Nordbladh's extensive analysis in Carl-Axel Moberg's *Similar Finds? Similar interpretations?* (Nordbladh 1981: G1–G79).

Baltzer's pioneering work also resulted in a magnificent illustrated publication printed in two volumes, the first of which was published in 1881 and the second in 1908 (Figs 2.15 and 2.16). It was praised widely and became a permanent reference for all future investigations of the rock carvings in Tanum and Bohuslän for almost a century since no one during this time was able to repeat the feat of Baltzer. This is shown in a striking way by the fact that Gunnar Ekelund, who led the National Heritage Board's inventory of petroglyphs in the area in the early 1970s, did not include new illustrations, but referred instead to Baltzer's posters. The great value of the work is also apparent through the production of a luxury edition with the posters of the '*most important*' rock carvings and some other relics, which were funded by the Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters Society in Gothenburg, Gothenburg and the Bohuslän Antiquarian Society in 1911 with a foreword by the then national curator, Oscar Montelius (Baltzer 1911). See also Oscar Almgren's comment below! In this work there is also a detailed yet concise history of research on the subject (Hörman 1911). Baltzer, probably as a result of his non-academic background, had no clear concept of the age and importance of the petroglyphs, but expressed instead a more modest view that: 'The rock carvings are but among the most important ancient monuments which Bohuslän owns, and they deserve to be well preserved.' (Baltzer 1911: 16, translated here).



Fig. 2.15. The rock carving on Aspeberget Tanum photographed from afar 1911. Photo: Lauritz Baltzer. (Source: SHFA_id259).

The inventory in Tanum gives rise to the first scientific synthesis: Oscar Almgren's first intervention

The person who was to present the first synthesis and interpretation of the Bohuslän rock carvings was Oscar Almgren (Fig. 2.17) in his study *Hällristningar och Kultbruk* published in 1927. It was based on Almgren's own fieldwork in Tanum published in the series *Bidrag till kännedom om Göteborg och Bohusläns forntid och historia* in 1912 as part of the Gothenburg inventory (Bertilsson and Winberg 1978). The actual fieldwork was undertaken during the years 1890, 1903 and 1904. Almgren emphasises the importance of Baltzer's documentary work, which was also a reason why the rock carvings were approached during his own inventory:

'Although the images sometimes could be more perfect, they can never be said to be in any material degree misleading and they are superior to their predecessors. Mr Baltzer's work is a truly great achievement, which will be the chief source of knowledge about Tanum's and Bohuslän's petroglyphs for a long time' (Almgren 1912: 475, translated here).

This was certainly true and, what's more, the same was to become true about Almgren's work in progress.

The resulting study was originally inspired by Josef Helander, a researcher in history of religion, who held the opinion that some sun symbols on the Swedish rock carvings, in the form of a disc carried by a human and attached to a two-wheeled wagon, clearly represent prehistoric cultic actions (Helander 1906; Almgren, O. 1912: 564pp). Almgren was very well read and exhibits a broad

knowledge of contemporary archaeology, ethnology and anthropology, both from Sweden, the Nordic countries and internationally. One illuminating example is that he had read and been influenced by J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. Almgren's study with its comparative analyses based on a cultural anthropological perspective became ground-breaking and was the standard for future research on rock art until the 1980s. A fair description of this event is to describe it as the hitherto most significant in the process of documentation and exploration of the Bohuslän rock carvings. Almgren's thorough treatment of the subject was so fundamental that its mark is indelible, strongly influencing much of the research that emerged in the subsequent half-century, and it continues to be respected and remains useful even today. This is evident from the reference lists of some recent research works dealing with the rock carvings in Bohuslän (e.g. Kaul 1998; Ling 2008; Vogt 2006; 2012).



Fig. 2.16. Graphic printing of the rock carving at Aspeberget in Tanum made by Lauritz Baltzer and published in 1884. (Source: SHFA_id6457).



Fig. 2.17. A young Oscar Almgren at the time of the research studies in Uppsala during the 1890s. Photograph taken with self-timer. Photo: Oscar Almgren. (Source: SHFA). By courtesy of Ingela Almgren.

Advocating an alternative theory: Gunnar Ekholm

Almgren's main contemporary objector, Gunnar Ekholm, viewed the rock carvings as connected to, and expressions of, a cult of death and rituals performed in that context (Ekholm 1916; 1922). In his view this was demonstrated by the closeness of the rock panels to the Bronze Age burial Cairns. Almgren, on the other hand, saw the rock carvings as the result of cult activity linked to fertility and Bronze Age farming. He argued that the petroglyphs on the rock faces located adjacent to

the then pastures and arable soils supported this interpretation (Fig. 2.18). However, although he favoured the alternative interpretation he conceded that the rock carvings might still be 'put on the death cult account' ('...*kunna vara att helt skriva på döds kultens konto.*') (Almgren 1927: 256). In his argumentation he refers to studies presented by contemporary colleagues in archaeology and the history of religion like Oscar Montelius and Martin Nilsson concerning the Nordic Midwinter Feast and the celebration of Christmas in historic times. In fact, it was also Montelius who introduced the religious-magical theory for the interpretation of the rock carvings, which, in his view, described the Bronze Age fairy tales, myths and beliefs that we can no longer understand (Ohlmarks 1966: 12). This factum stands in interesting contrast to the categorisation recently presented by Kristiansen (2012: 70–71). Montelius is there regarded as a principal representative of the Rationalistic era of archaeology at the second half of the nineteenth century, while Almgren occupied a similar position among the leading archaeological researchers in the Romantic era at the beginning of the twentieth century. This does not mean that Kristiansen's analysis is wrong, but rather that the orientation of general processes and that of the individuals involved are not always congruent.



Fig. 2.18. Photograph from 1903 of rock carving at Bro Utmark Tanum, possibly the first landscape taken on a rock carving there. The landscape was then totally treeless and the two people standing at the far left respectively far right mark the extension of the rock carving. Photo: Oscar Almgren. (Source: SHFA_id 312).

Ekholm's interpretation of the rock carvings resulting from cult actions

associated with funerals and death is supported by many credible expressions that he refers to:

‘The overwhelming majority of our permanent memorials are funeral, and as for the antiquities, it’s a well-known fact that our greatest treasures in museums come from tombs or death sacrifices. All this is testimony that it is the fear mixed with reverence for the dead that had been one of the leading forces in the lives of the ancient Norsemen. And if we consider our petroglyphs alongside important epigraphic monuments – the image stones – and the rune stones – it becomes immediately apparent how they obviously had a similar purpose: to help the dead across to the other shore, or in memorable writing from oblivion and decay save at least his name’ (Ekholm 1922a: 258, translated here).

This quotation is taken from one of his intense pleadings for the interpretation of the rock carvings to be seen as a result of the grave and death cult, the debate in *Fornvännen* 1922 with Bror Schnittger, which was triggered by newly discovered petroglyphs at Berga-Tuna in Södermanland (Ekholm 1922a and b; Schnittger 1922a and b). Today, almost a century later, both Ekholm’s reasoning and that of Schnittger seem to be packed with personal and often disparaging comments about the colleague who questions the other’s theory. This hostile attitude and condescending envy was probably one of the reasons why Ekholm lost the battle of the interpretation of the petroglyphs to Almgren (cf. Ling 2008: 26p with references).

The interpretation becomes permanent: Oscar Almgren’s second intervention

Another reason was apparently that Oscar Almgren was superior, not only to Ekholm, but also to most of his contemporary colleagues, in terms of language skills, book learning and academic rigor, characteristics that together contributed to Almgren’s unchallenged position as the master interpreter of petroglyphs in Sweden (Ling 2013: 17; Fig. 2.19). Almgren also argued against one viable interpretation of petroglyphs as an expression of art according to the principle ‘*Art pour l’Art*’, which then was claimed by the likes of Sophus Müller (1920) based on ethnological (that is, *anthropological*) observations of overseas indigenous people. Müller very explicitly and authoritatively concluded that:

‘it is obvious the way you always knew, that the general human artistry has from the earliest times, and later in many places at different times, been expressed through an embellishment of the empty space, the same with empty mountainsides to appliances, with the production of images...’ (Müller 1920: 160, translated here).

In addition, Almgren pointed to parallels from other cultures, eras and regions of the world with carved images similar to those in Tanum. One illustrative example is seen in the foot soles, regarded as symbols of divine beings according to the legends attached to them. In India they are known as Buddha’s footprints, on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, Christ’s feet. Similar stones that can be found in Catholic churches are linked to the saints who stood on them during their sermons. He thought that all these cases are illustrations of modernisations of pagan beliefs, also detected in primitive people. Almgren also believed that there is a very strong religious element behind the rock carvings, and that the religion of the Nordic Bronze Age was practically oriented. It was performed in order to influence the gods in a positive way to promote the crops, ‘It is this [magic] that so strongly

comes to meet us in the contemporary nature of people's religions and in the European people's superstitions' (Almgren 1912: 569, translated here). Here we see clearly that Almgren's thinking and conclusions of the study published only 15 years later is already fully developed.

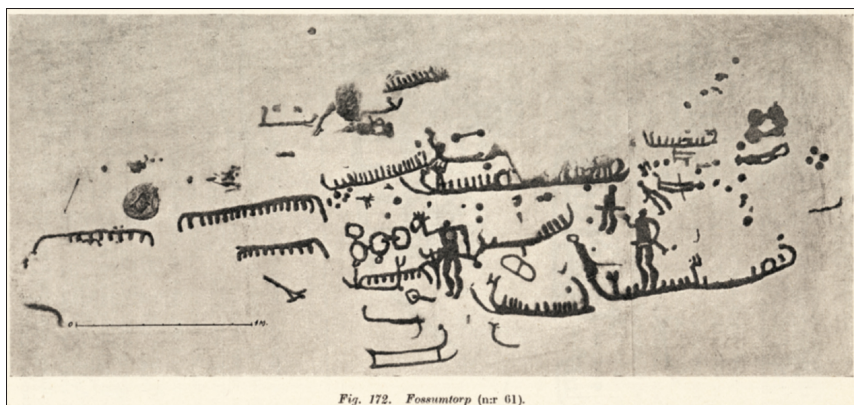


Fig. 172. Fossumtorp (nr 61).

Fig. 2.19. Graphic print of rock carving at Fossumtorp in Tanum, based on paper impressions where the outlines were drawn with black chalk, copied to tracing paper and washed with Indian ink before it was photographed for printing (Almgren 1912). (Source: SHFA).



Fig. 194. Bro utmark (detalj från nr 173 c).

Fig. 2.20. Spear-armed duelling warriors, detail from rock carving at Bro Utmark Tanum. Photo: Oscar Almgren. (Source: SHFA).

In his later study he also saw a clear connection between the petroglyphs in Bohuslän and the Norse religion and the various god figures as they appear in the Sagas (Fig. 2.20). He developed his thoughts in the following way:

‘... the Bronze Age god will combine attributes, which later are distributed between the phallic god Freyr, the axe god (or hammer god) Thor and the spear god Odin. The axe and the spear appearing variously as an attribute to the caric spear god Zeus Labrandeus on coin images (Montelius SFT X, p 278f.) he carries his spear in one hand and the flash beam in the other. The spear as well as the axe should then have symbolized the lightning’s poignant force’ (Almgren 1927: 282, translated here).

As a logical consequence, he argued that the axes and spears were symbols for the weather forces in the same way as daggers and palstaves were in the carvings in the Alps. His deep knowledge of the source material acquired through his own fieldwork in Tanum, coupled with strong language skills and inspiration from neighbouring sciences such as ethnology and history of religion, enabled this and other far-reaching conclusions that his study of the rock carvings resulted in. We have already touched upon the fact that *Hällristningar och Kultbruk* was a seminal publication that became a gateway to future work, a first total synthesis that dominated research for many years. Somehow it seems that Almgren himself sensed that his work would have this effect, although he also expressed the hope

that the opposite would occur:

‘When I now, through the benevolence of our Academy received the opportunity, so comprehensively to present the views of the problem of the petroglyph in which, I have thought, after many years of study, for my part to remain, I intend rather not to participate in any future discussions of these issues. Now let others take the word, and let the future judge, the extent to which the views were viable’ (Almgren 1927: preface, translated here).

Concluding remarks

The key events and individuals from the first official recording of the petroglyphs in Tanum in 1792 to the publishing of the first scientific synthesis in 1927 have been outlined here. In the course of this 135-year process the perception of the petroglyphs gradually but continuously evolved from being regarded as folk oddities to remarkable relics, and from remarkable relics to a scientific substratum. This was a transformation in which the comprehensive documentation of the petroglyphs, and the accuracy of this inventory, were key elements that decided its pace and success. The increasing involvement of academically trained individuals led to a situation where the rock carvings in Bohuslän came to be recognised as an important archaeological source material. The publication of *Hällristningar och Kultbruk* demonstrated their value and potential for academic research and confirmed their study as a scientific field in its own right.

An abbreviated summary of this process is as follows:

Folk oddities:

Colonel Klinckowström: Litsleby (1751). *Dating:* Unknown, *Interpretation:* ‘The petrified Scottish Commander’.

Remarkable relics:

- C. G. G. *Hilfeling*: Recorded rocks: Litsleby + 2 panels (1792). *Dating:* Unknown, *Interpretation:* ‘Giant Fighter’.
- C. G. *Brunius*: Recorded rocks: 100 panels (1815–1817, 1838 and 1868). *Dating:* Stone Age–very Early Bronze Age, *Interpretation:* Symbolic picture writing.
- L. *Åberg*: Recorded rocks: 14 panels (1839–1840). *Dating:* AD 100–500 – Vikings. *Interpretation:* memories of heroes’ sports and glorious expeditions
- A. E. *Holmberg*: Recorded rocks: 61 panels (1842–1845 and 1848). *Dating:* Middle–Late Iron Age, *Interpretation:* memories of sea voyages and heroic deeds.

Scientific substratum

- L. *Baltzer*: Recorded rocks: 146 panels (1884–1908). *Dating:* Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age V. Rydberg in preface, *Interpretation:* ‘We will never find the key’.
- Oscar *Montelius*: Recorded rocks: 0 panels (1874–1879). *Dating:* Early Bronze Age, *Interpretation:* Descriptions of Bronze Age fairy tales, myths and beliefs that ‘we can no longer understand’.

Oscar Almgren: *Recorded rocks*: 264 panels (1891, 1903–1904, 1912 and 1927).
Dating: Bronze Age, *Interpretation*: Religious-magical expressions of cultic actions linked to agriculture.

This overview has described the actors involved in, and who affected, the process by which Tanum's petroglyphs became recognised as objects of great historical value – a process in which they were first regarded as a phenomenon of unknown origin, significance and age only to later achieve a prominent position in the booming field of archaeological research of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

'The rock carvings of Northern Bohuslän are one of the treasures of the ancient world of the north. No other area in all of Europe can surpass Bohuslän in the number and variety of images carved in the living rock.' (Coles1994).

During an almost incomparable century, constantly new and expanded inventory and documentation projects focused on Tanum's petroglyphs. This also led to the dispelling of the main scientific mysteries about the dating and significance of the rock carvings by some of the most prominent scholars and cultural personalities of the time. When the Gothenburg inventory was finalised in Tanum in 1912 nearly 300 carvings had been discovered, described and marked on official maps. One could then assume that the carvings were now in safe custody under the public Law of Antiquities protective enclosures. But that turned out not to be the case, since it would take another half century before the National Heritage Board came to take a more direct responsibility for the rock carvings by engaging directly on site in Tanum. Meanwhile, a number of public and private researchers were to assert their ideas on the inventory of rock art and its interpretation. The reasons behind this process will be considered elsewhere.

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Hyper-masculinity and the construction of gender identities in the Bronze Age rock carvings of southern Sweden

Lynne Bevan

This paper explores sexual imagery and gender identity in the rock art of Valcamonica, northern Italy and Bohuslän, southern Sweden and their potential for investigating contemporary social organisation, ritual and religion. Rock art from the two areas is compared and contrasted. Themes discussed include phallic imagery, particularly with regard to images of warfare and hostage-taking, the concept of hyper-masculinity as applied to Bronze Age carvings of male figures associated with phallic imagery and weapons, evidence for male and female gendered rituals in the rock art, and, finally, how the rock art may have been used by its creators and its reception in subsequent eras.

KEYWORDS: Rock art, sexual imagery, phallic imagery, warfare, hostage-taking, hyper-masculinity, gendered identities, male houses, female houses, conflict, initiation, over-carving, framing, curation

Introduction

This paper revisits my earlier work on sexual and gendered imagery in the prehistoric rock art of Naquane National Park, Valcamonica, northern Italy (Bevan 2000; 2001; 2005 and 2006). At Naquane my work focused on the individual images, viewing the surfaces of the rocks as a continuing discourse between different gender groups, between mortals and their deities, and between past and present, and interpreting the resulting carvings and overcarvings as a form of developing collage. I argued that the changing subject matter and fluctuating gender orientation of the carvings reflected differential access to, and usage of, the rock art zones through time by different social groups.

Pivotal to my study was the exploration of sexual imagery and gender identity in

the rock art and their potential for exploring contemporary social organization, ritual and religion. In the course of my study I made constant reference to the rock art of Scandinavia, particularly to the Bronze Age rock carvings of southern Sweden which shared a similar repertoire of images to those of Valcamonica, and, it is argued here, a potentially similar ideology and world view. In this paper I will compare and contrast various aspects of the rock art from these two very different geographical areas.

Themes discussed here include the various manifestations and past interpretations of phallic imagery, particularly with regard to images of warfare and hostage-taking, the evidence for male and female gendered rituals in the rock art, and, finally, how the rock art may have been used by its creators and its reception by viewers in subsequent eras. Similar frameworks of analysis to those of my Italian rock art study are used here, along with an exploration of the concept of hyper-masculinity as applied to Swedish Bronze Age carvings of male figures which are so often associated with phallic imagery and weapons. Detailed and exhaustive study of all instances of sexual imagery and/or phallic display in Scandinavian rock art is not possible here, so discussion will instead focus on a selection of rock carvings from Bohuslän, around the area of Tanum, with suggestions for further future research.

Phallic imagery, violence and warfare in rock carvings

Many images of violence and warfare, often associated with phallic display, are found in Swedish rock carvings (Fig. 3.1) and also in Valcamonica, northern Italy (Figs 3.2 and 3.3). The examples illustrated here are from Rock Tanum 255 at Fossum and Rocks 47 and 50 at Naquane. While the Swedish rock art discussed here mainly dates to various phases of the Bronze Age up to the pre-Roman Iron Age, in northern Italy the rock art dates to the Bronze and Iron Age periods, with most martial scenes and phallic imagery dating to the Early Iron Age, although there is some degree of chronological overlap between rock art phasing in the two areas.



Fig. 3.1. Scenes of warfare and phallic display on Rock 255, Fossum, Bohuslän (from Ling 2010: fig. 4, 35).

While most phallic carvings, particularly those associated with warfare, date predominantly to the Iron Age, the phallic motif in northern Italian rock art continues throughout prehistory, though its various manifestations and associations change with time. In Valcamonica phallic imagery acts as a male signifier in rock carvings of warfare, as well as in other activities such as hunting and ploughing, and in ritualistic scenes associated with solar motifs, sexual acts, female figures and potentially divine beings. Many non-martial, apparently ritualistic, manifestations of phallic imagery date to the earlier Bronze Age and are associated with stick figures, often interpreted as oranti or worshipper figures, apparently involved in dances and rituals, which can be of male (with a phallic line between the legs), female (with a small circle or cupmark between the legs), or indeterminate gender (no apparent sexual identification). A number of these figures appear on Rock 47 at Naquane, mainly down the left hand side, although some have become associated with later carvings of warriors with broader bodies and a small group at the bottom of the carved area has been over-carved with a large house motif (Fig. 3.2). A larger concentration of these figures appears on Rock 50 at Naquane, again mainly on the left hand side of the rock, and includes females and figures with large hands. One apparently male figure with exaggerated phallic imagery at the bottom of the main group of figures, appears to be wearing

a mask, possibly representing an animal of some kind (Fig. 3.3). A figure located slightly above the apparently masked figure has very large hands with splayed fingers. The large-handed motif, usually regarded as indicating some kind of supernatural, possibly shamanic, activity or experience, is mainly associated with Middle–Late Bronze Age rock art in Valcamonica, and was also employed in later periods, possibly to indicate similar themes outside of ‘normal’ experience, perhaps in a ritualistic or shamanic context, often in carvings of warfare and violence (Bevan 2006: 125). It is interesting that it also occurs frequently in the rock art of Bohuslän (Ling 2008: 179).

The ubiquitous hut or house motif in the Valcamonica rock art, the largest and most elaborate example of which appears on Rock 73 at Naquane (Fig. 3.4), is comparable to the predominant ship motif in Swedish rock art (e.g. Fig. 3.1) in terms of sheer quantity, and also perhaps in terms of significant and specific associations with other motifs. These two common motifs have been described as ‘depictions of social environments and actions’ relating to their respective terrestrial or maritime locations (Cornell and Ling 2010: 78–80). The recurring image of the hut/house in Valcamonica has been interpreted as portraying ‘wooden Alp granaries connected to the terrestrial Alpine landscape’ (*ibid.*, 80). However, at Naquane, and elsewhere in Valcamonica, house depictions occur in many different forms and contexts, suggesting that this was a more complex, multi-faceted motif, on one level portraying real buildings and villages and on another being associated with different genders at different times as female and male cult houses (Bevan 2006: 144–146). The house motif was also used as a device to frame and contain earlier carvings, an example of which can be seen on Rock 47 (Fig. 3.2) and on Rock 35, the so-called ‘Rock of the Village’, at Naquane, where three house motifs have been superimposed over earlier images of running stags and other animals (Bevan 2006: pl. 6.48, 144). The largest and most elaborate example on Rock 73 at Naquane (Fig. 3.4) is equipped with its own ladder and has circular motifs in its roof space at its roof terminals, suggestive, along with other iconography, of a special or cultic function for this building, perhaps connected with animal sacrifice (Bevan 2006: 112).

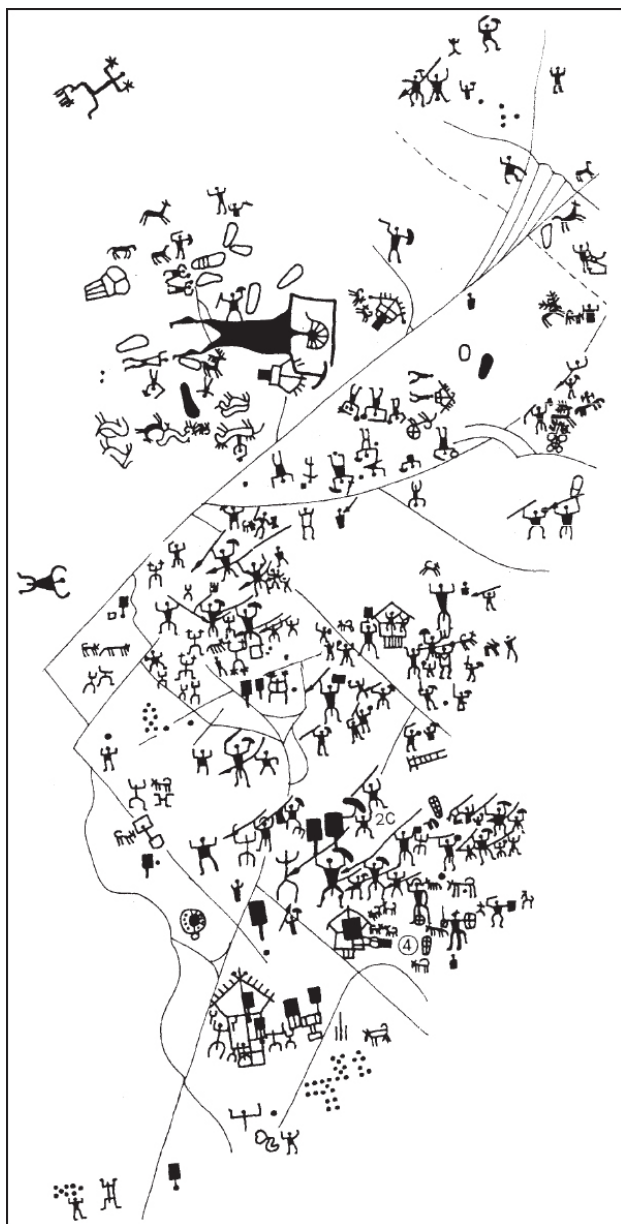


Fig. 3.2. Oranti or worshipper figures and later warrior figures, the latter associated with houses and palette symbols, on Rock 47, Naquane (after Fusco and Galbiati 1990: 46).

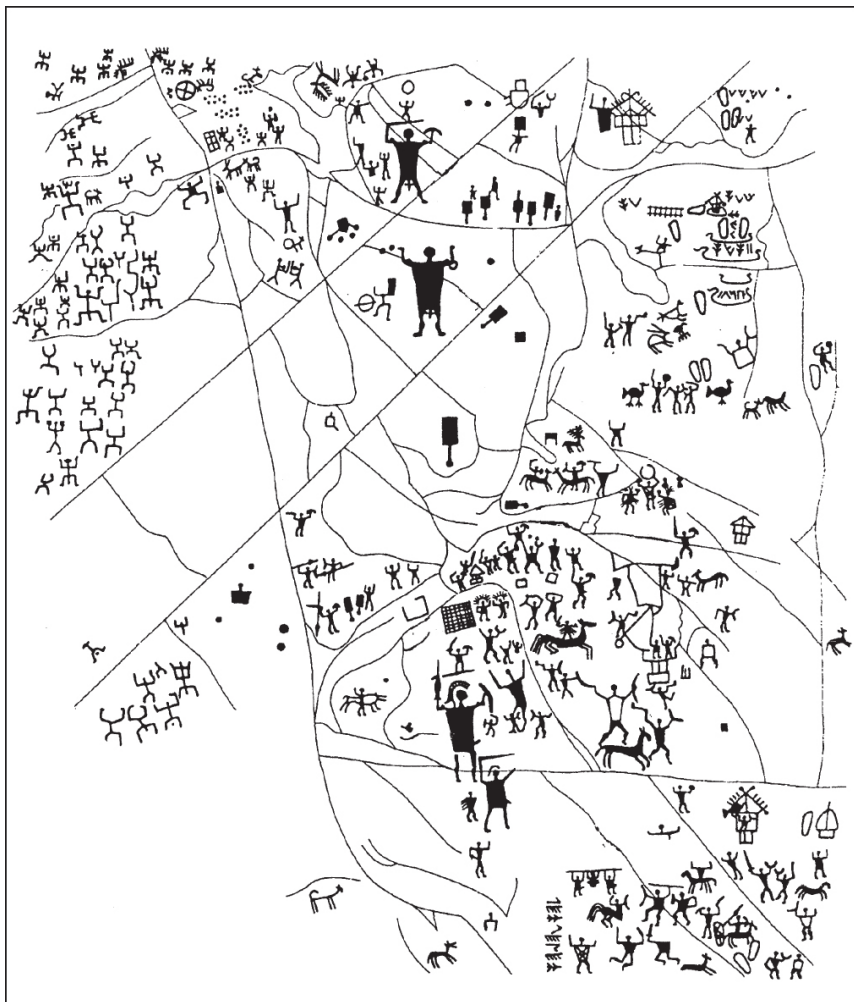


Fig. 3.3. Oranti or worshipper figures including male, female, large handed and a masked figure (left hand side) and later warriors including paired combatants and figures associated with houses on Rock 50, Naquane (after Fusco and Galbiati 1990: 48).

In Swedish rock art the ship motif occurs in quantity in most of the rock carvings of Bohuslän. In some carvings, such as Tanum 356, the ship and crew are a focus of acrobatic and ritual action, with large figures in horned helmets flanking and leaping over a crew delineated by a row of lines (Ling 2012: fig. 12, 477). In other rock art scenes, like the one on Tanum 255 (Fig. 3.1), action takes place outside and around the ships, although the image of the ship remains important. The ships are numerous and shown in rows, separating and sometimes almost framing carvings incorporating disproportionately large figures engaged in warfare and rituals, most of whom appear to be warriors and many of whom exhibit phallic imagery. Before discussing house and ship motifs further, it is necessary to

focus attention on interpreting the warrior figures appearing in the rock art.



Fig. 3.4. The largest and most elaborate house in Valcamonica, Rock 73, Naquane (after Fusco and Galbiati 1990: 52).

‘Exaggerated attributes’ and hostage scenes in rock art

John Coles has suggested that certain groups of figures, mainly male warriors, arranged in rows in Scandinavian Bronze Age rock carvings may have been depictions of ceremonial processions (2003). The underlying reasons for the use of this recurring motif – the line of warriors – which is especially common in southern Scandinavian rock art, remain unknown. Ideological connections with ritual, religion, travel, trade and sea-faring have been postulated, the latter unsurprisingly connected with the many images of boats in the rock art (see Ling 2008; 2012).

In northern Bohuslän, for example, it would seem logical that the rock carvings depicted ‘real warriors and organised rivalry in the area’ (Bertilsson 1989: 315). The arrangement of these carvings at specific sites within the landscape would probably also have been significant to the makers and viewers of the rock art. Coles suggests that ‘the lines of humans may have been assembled and memorialised in order to establish the right to the land, the place marking its focal point or the route from which the assertion of occupancy could emanate’ (2003: 248). He goes on to say that ‘by the exhibition of artistry and perhaps by *the exaggeration of attributes* (my italics), the base was strengthened’ (*ibid.*, 248).

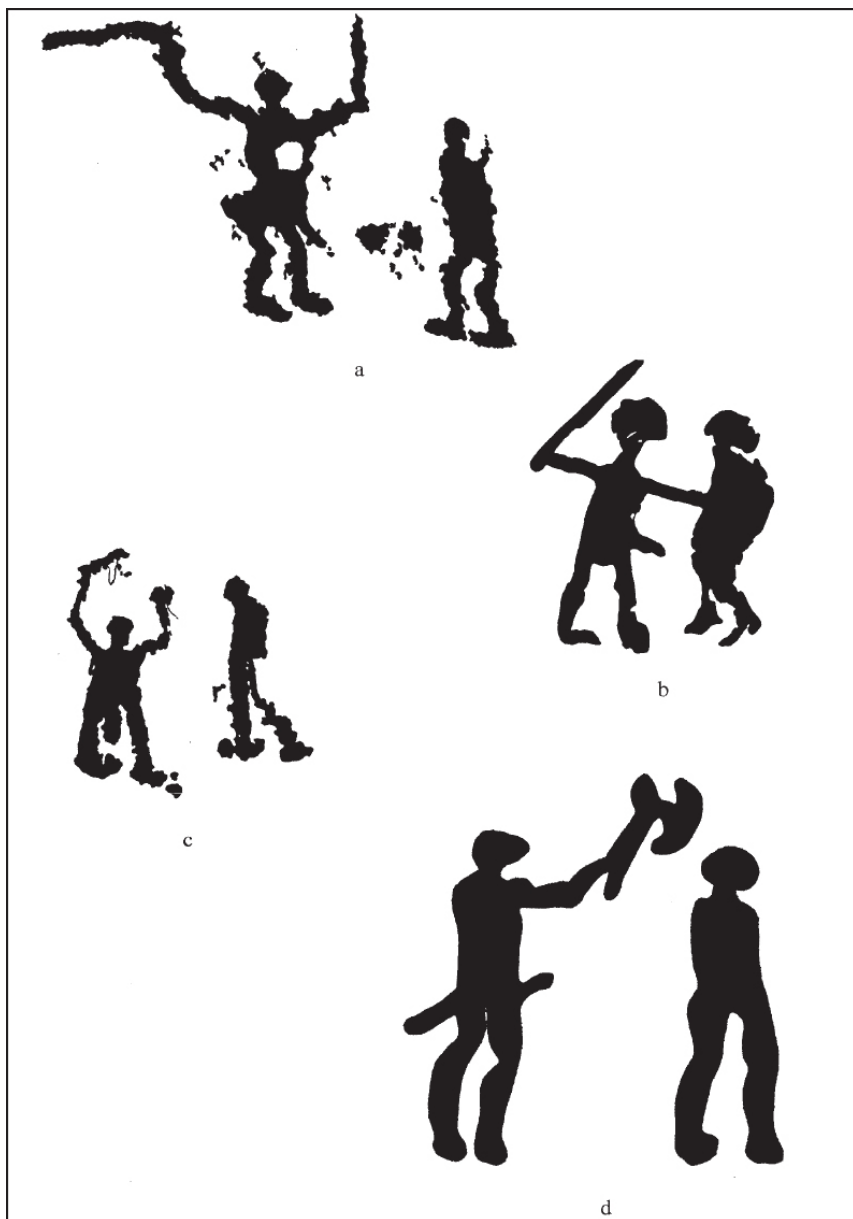


Fig. 3.5. Hostage Scenes: a. and b. Naquane a. (after Sansoni 1987: fig. 64, 71), b. Carpena (after Anati 1964: 177); c. Carpena (after Sansoni 1987: fig. 63, 71); and d. Fossum, Bohuslän (after Sansoni 1987: fig. 65, 71).

A common *exaggerated attribute* of the male warrior carvings of Bronze Age Sweden is phallic imagery, which is most commonly linked with violence in

carvings of armed men during the Bronze Age in northern Europe and in the Iron Age in northern Italy. In both areas phallic warriors were depicted engaged in fighting (Fig. 3.1), and interestingly, in hostage taking (Figs 3.1 and 3.5). In hostage scenes like those shown at the bottom left hand side of the carvings on Tanum 255 (Figs 3.1 and 3.5d) and in carvings from Naquane and Carpene, Valcamonica (Fig. 3.5a–c) the exaggerated phallus is a recurring and power-laden motif. In all these scenes, armed, phallic warriors hold weapons above the heads of apparently bound captives. These scenes have been interpreted as potential executions in both Bronze Age Fossum, Bohuslän (Tanum 255, Figs 3.1 and Fig. 3.3d) and Iron Age Valcamonica (Fig. 3.5a–c) (Sansoni 1987: figs 63–64, 71).

However, these scenes differ from the graphic scenes of execution conducted by groups of archers in the Neolithic rock art of the Spanish Levant, for example, which portray the end result of violence in the form of bodies shot through with arrows (Guilaine and Zammit 1998: figs 31–35, 162–177). In contrast, rather than showing explicit violence, the hostage scenes from Valcamonica and northern Europe hint, perhaps more disturbingly, at impending violence. Two Iron Age carvings from Naquane (Fig. 3.5a–b) have been interpreted as portraying human sacrifice (Anati 1964: 177). One of the hostages in the rock art from Naquane is very small in stature and appears to be wearing a cloak (Fig. 3.5b). Were this figure to be interpreted as female then the impending violence may have eventually involved rape. However, whether any of these scenes relate to the execution of captives, human sacrifice, or even rape, they link the related themes of phallic imagery, weapons and violence or the threat of violence (Bevan 2001; 2005 and 2006).

With the exception of the possible female hostage from Naquane, the other hostage scenes from Italy and Bohuslän share a common theme: the juxtaposition of phallic power and emasculation. The armed warrior is always shown with an exaggerated phallus whereas the captive is not, though an important consideration might be whether the captive is shown as a gender neutral or a de-gendered being. In all of the scenes both the phallus and weapon belonging to the aggressor are shown exaggerated in size. In contrast, the captive, who is usually assumed to be male, is rendered emasculated and powerless by his captivity. He has become less of a man.

However, rather than featuring a single aggressor and single hostage in the cases discussed above, other possible hostage scenes in Bohuslän consist of lines of several figures, their captivity implied by their ‘armless’ appearance (Coles 2003: 219). Perhaps the best example is a scene on Tanum 25 which shows a line of 11 ‘armless’ figures, all of whom appear to have their arms tied behind their backs (Fig. 3.6), a binding which Coles describes as ‘clearly deliberate, and the figures are thereby disenfranchised, rendered harmless’ (Coles 2003: fig. 4, 219, 221). Four members of the armless group on Rock 25 are phallic which contradicts the general practice of visually emasculating captives, as seen in the one-on-one hostage scenes discussed above. In addition, Coles lists several other similar groups of armless figures from the region, two of which appear to have ‘sword scabbard lines’ (*ibid.*, 219). Again this appears to contradict the visual association between the weapon and phallus being restricted to the captor rather than the captive, and the general emasculation of captives, who are unarmed in both senses of the word, in both Scandinavian and northern Italian rock art. Perhaps the presence or

absence of a phallus only applies in the one-to-one hostage scenes and not in groups of apparently bound captives like the one on Rock Tanum 25. Here, the presence or absence of phallic imagery could simply indicate the sex of the captive, implying that this was a mixed sex group. One of the non-phallic figures appears to have long hair, yet the others all look alike. Could the phallic figures be younger warriors and the non-phallic figures older males who no longer participated in warfare? Irrespective of their sex and although they do not appear to be in imminent danger of being attacked or killed, the arrangement of these apparently captive figures does suggest that they are under some kind of threat and their armless appearance must have been in some way important. Armless, and other partial figures of various kinds, are common in both the Scandinavian and Italian rock art studied here (see Bevan 2006: 123–125 for discussion of partial figures in the rock art of Valcamonica), though this example seems to be the result of binding rather than being deliberately represented without arms.



Fig. 3.6. Group of hostages, Rock 25, Tanum (author's photograph).

Though few in number, these recurring potential multiple hostage scenes constitute an interesting group, the carving of which must have had some significance. What was going to happen to the hostages? Would they be killed, perhaps sacrificed, or enslaved, perhaps even be forced to crew the ships depicted in the rock art? Many of the carved panels depicting potential captives, such as the Tanum 25 group, also include images of ships, though this is a recurring and predominant image in much of the rock art. Whether they showed single or multiple captives, what was the purpose of these hostage scenes? Did these scenes record military triumphs, demonstrate the display of power over competing

neighbours, or the taking of prisoners from further afield? Perhaps they were a warning showing justice being meted out to offenders against a law or social code? Were they representative signifiers of local male power and hypermasculinity?

In a study of rock art in an Andean valley in Argentina, Maria Isabel Hernandez Llosas describes how events from the seventeenth century Spanish invasion and Indian war of resistance were recorded in the rock art there (Hernandez Llosas 2012: 355). Contemporary rock art 'depicts horsemen engaged in battle scenes from the war of resistance' (*ibid.*, figs 20.5.6 and 20.5.7). These scenes are sometimes 'associated with geometric motifs...which are characteristic for this time period, and horsemen with Indian prisoners marching' (*ibid.*, fig. 20.5.30). The carvings of battle scenes between mounted European soldiers and indigenous bowmen, with the latter sometimes represented as prisoners of war 'clearly had a symbolic narrative function in depicting events that were actually taking place' (*ibid.*: 359). The association between the geometric motifs and battle and hostage scenes might suggest that the indigenous people were recording their spirited but failed resistance to the Spanish overlords. In this way the decorated rocks might have become cenotaphs to a dead culture, recording a last desperate attempt to oust the invaders. Perhaps the hostages shown were important resistance leaders whose capture was disastrous for their colleagues rather than simply being symbolic of emasculation by superior military might? Conversely, was the rock art the casual *graffiti* of the invader, telling their story and usurping the past rock art narrative recorded on the stones? Did this historical rock art catalogue episodes in the demise of a society or celebrate its martial power, perhaps recording the triumph of one group of warriors over another? Can prehistoric rock art be interpreted in a similar way? Whatever the underlying reasons behind the depiction of hostages and hostage takers in rock art, whether prehistoric or relatively recent in date, these carvings do appear to record events that actually took place in a time of war and social unrest. But why, in the case of the prehistoric rock art scenes, should the *exaggerated attribute* of the phallic motif have been so important? Were these carvings signifiers of a cult of hyper-masculinity in their contemporary societies?

Hyper-masculinity, a term used to describe exaggerated masculine characteristics associated with male imagery in various art media of the Roman period (Kampen *et al.* 2002: 12–13), is particularly apt when applied to male imagery in the prehistoric rock art being discussed here. In Roman art such hyper-masculinity was manifested, for instance, in images of bull-necked, macho emperors on coins and in the form of statuary portraits, in statues of senators and elite men, by the ubiquity of phallic imagery in art and broader material culture and in representations of the god Priapus, by images of martial deities such as Mars and the hero Hercules and of triumphant male rider deities, and in the image and person of the gladiator with his extreme manliness. Such images were both numerous and geographically widespread throughout the empire, their message insistent and insidious. The gladiator was a figure 'at the margins of society, his masculinity always Other to the moderate and idealized manliness of the citizen' (*ibid.*, 12), yet at the same time an aspirational figure to both men and women. Were the phallic warriors seen in the rock art of Sweden and northern Italy regarded as being in some way 'other', that is not representative of ordinary living men in the societies which produced the rock art? Their depiction at larger-than-

life size and the exaggeration of the phallic imagery could be interpreted as being suggestive of a superhuman identification. Were they figures from myths and stories, perhaps heroes or ancestor figures, famed as much for their potency and procreative powers as for their role in protecting their people from danger? In this way their weapons could be regarded as death-dealing and their erect phalli as life-giving. Or were they a hyper-masculine exaggeration of contemporary males shown participating in male-orientated rituals?

Phallic imagery, sexuality and male cults

In my previous work on the various manifestations of phallic imagery in rock art I discussed the phallus as a symbol of difference and domination and its close association with warfare in various cultural contexts (Bevan 1994). One such context was intra-group warfare in Papua New Guinea where the similarity between the penis sheaths worn by certain groups of warriors such as the Sambia (Herdt 1984), and the phallic male figures seen in prehistoric rock art is obvious. This similarity led Tim Yates (1993) to draw a parallel between these two chronologically and geographically disparate manifestations of phallic display and reinterpret the phallic imagery in the rock art of Bohuslän as symbolizing Bronze Age male puberty rites reminiscent of the male homosexual initiation cults of Papua New Guinea.

Yates argued that the phallic males among the rock art were, like Herdt observed among the Sambia, older males whose sexual contact with young male initiates was pivotal to their transition to manhood (1993: 48–52). His thesis was based upon both societies being ‘dominated by the ideals of an aggressive masculine ethic’ (*ibid.*, 69), although ritualized homosexuality is by no means universal in Papua New Guinea. By reinterpreting scenes in the rock art which had previously been regarded as heterosexual ritual weddings (Almgren 1927; Coles 1990: fig. 11e) as sexual acts between males, Yates envisioned the rock art solely as an arena for the construction of masculinity. The phallus became the single most important of a suite of signifiers of male identity including strongly-defined calf muscles, an absence of breasts and ponytails, which Yates regarded as a hairstyle sported only by younger males (1993: 42–45), though the latter attribute is generally regarded as female (Kaul 1998: 248). Contemporary bronze statuettes of females with defined calf muscles and relatively small breasts characteristic of an athletic physique (Lindgren 1999; Bevan 2001), necessary for the acrobatics seen in many of the rock carvings (Fuglesvedt 1999: fig. 1.11, 39) argue against all the figures in the carvings being male. In any case, the non-phallic figures with circular cupmarks between their legs, which Yates interpreted as being young males, are usually regarded as female figures both in Scandinavian rock art (e.g. Almgren 1927; Mandt 1987; Lindgren 1999; Sogness 2001) as well as in Italian rock art (e.g. Robb 1997; Bahn 1998; Bevan 2001; 2006).

Yates’ thesis was criticized for removing all females from the rock art (Lindgren 1999: 44), even the large proportion of gender-neutral figures with neither phallus nor cupmark as a sexual indicator (Englestad 2001). However, even if the armed but non-phallic figures in the prehistoric carvings both in Scandinavia and Valcamonica were interpreted as male, this suggests that non-initiates were allowed to take part in battles, which would not be the case among initiating

warrior societies such as the Sambia. Moreover, if we accept Yates' reinterpretation of a sexual carving from Hoghem in Tanum as portraying a male homosexual act (Yates 1993: fig. 1:7, 46–47), the ambiguous, possibly female, gender of the 'priest' figure holding aloft the axe-like object in the Hoghem carving argues against only phallic (i.e. male) figures being mature initiates, unless religious men were of a different category. The whole ethos of Sambian male initiation rites is their exclusionary nature, that the secrecy of the rites is an essential vehicle of religious and social control over women (Herdt 1984). If male initiation was a feature of European Bronze Age life, sexual exclusivity cannot be demonstrated in the carvings, and, as such, Sambia society is not an appropriate model for the kinds of rituals being enacted here.

Despite the problems with Yates' thesis it remains an interesting one, not least in its radical departure from the traditional western binary division between male and female sexual identity, a division which he argues is not so clear-cut in non-western societies (1993: 48–49). The ideological parallel between the phallic warriors in the Bronze Age rock art and the penis-sheath wearing Sambia warriors, who would look almost identical if represented in rock art, is undeniable. It has been suggested that the phallic figures portrayed in rock art wore a false phallus or ritual penis case which could be put on for the performance of rituals (Kaul 1998: 248). Kaul cites the particular difficulty for the lur-blowers in 'maintaining a physical erection of the penis while tooting on their lurs' during lengthy rituals (*ibid.*, 248).

On the other hand, the phallic imagery seen in the prehistoric rock art might be conceptual rather than reflecting the nude or enhanced male body. While Yates' homosexual initiation rituals and associated beliefs in the transforming powers of semen cannot be demonstrated in the rock art, the interest in the phallus, indeed the very exaggeration of it, must have been significant. While it is arguably associated with male gender and often warfare, what are the underlying meanings behind exaggerated phallic imagery in rock art panels? Logically phallic imagery may relate to ideas about male power in an aggressive context. Were scenes of battle, the depiction of the triumphant warrior, and of the degendered hostage designed to instil fear in the eyes of the viewer or to inform them of past glories, of triumphs which contributed to the longevity of a specific social group in the landscape? Or were they simply hyper-masculine images of male societal ascendancy? The common association between phallic imagery and sexual scenes of various kinds in the rock art of Bohuslän is also of interest.

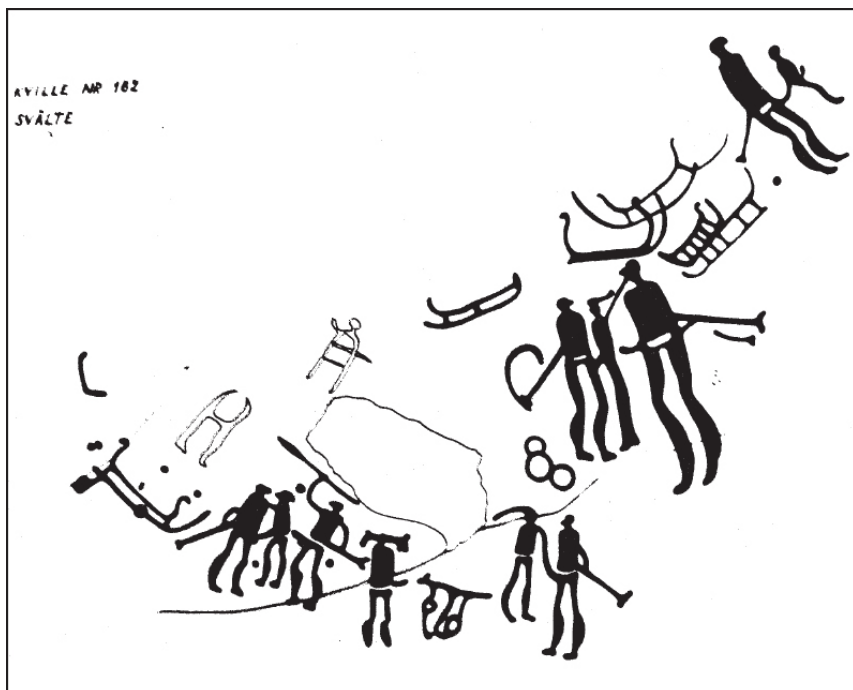


Fig. 3.7. Sexual scenes on Kville 182 (From Ling 2008, fig. 9.2, 169).

Many of the sexual scenes in the Bohuslän rock art are neither simplistic nor easily attributable to heterosexual, homosexual or other forms or manifestations of sexual behaviour. It has been suggested that some sexual scenes, including those which appear in the Kville 182 panel (Fig. 3.7), may not be considered 'ideal' (Ling 2008: 168–169, fig. 9.2), perhaps being considered deviant or even criminal today. Sexual scenes in this panel may be 'antagonistic', signifying 'dual standards and discrepancies and not just a perfect world' (*ibid.*, 169). Yet, how do we interpret these scenes if not through the lens of our own understanding? We have a word for almost every kind of manifestation of sexual behaviour and while we can perhaps appreciate that heterosexual intercourse, or even homosexuality as Yates suggests, might be connected to fertility rites, other sexual carvings showing zoophilia or even paedophilia are more difficult to understand and interpret. Although in a scene on the Kville 182 panel in which a large warrior appears to be sodomising a much smaller phallic figure, it is possible that the male contribution to fertility is being shown, with the large male perhaps creating the smaller one, rather than committing a deviant sexual act. The sexual images in the Kville 182 panel are problematic on many different levels, yet despite the sensitive subject matter are expressed with a strange fluidity of movement, almost as if a transference of power, perhaps a life force, is taking place, rather than sexual acts *per se*.

The phallic figures in the sexual scenes in the rock art of Bohuslän are almost always armed or at least equipped with a sword sheath. Sexual action often appears to take place in a context of combat or war, implying that sex, if that is

what we are actually seeing, may not be entirely consensual. This illustrates two important differences between the sexual scenes in the rock art of Bohuslän and those of Valcamonica. The Swedish sexual scenes are frequent and usually feature armed warriors, whereas sexual scenes in Italian rock art are relatively few, with most pre-dating the era of the armed warriors and taking the form of heterosexual scenes, often associated with ploughing (Fossati 1991: fig. 38, 24). The armed phallic warriors, a common motif in Italian rock art, were never shown engaged in sexual acts. Even the so-called masturbating figure on Rock 1 at Foppe di Nadro, though closely associated with armed warriors, was not himself armed (Bevan 2006: fig. 7.125, 152). Other sexual scenes in Valcamonica contemporary with the phallic warriors featured bestiality, in which again the perpetrators were not shown bearing arms (*ibid.*, figs 7.126–7.128, 152–153). The manifestations of sexual behaviour in the rock carvings of Valcamonica appear to have a limited distribution, clustering around the Capo di Ponte area (de Abreu 1989: fig. 12, 30), though not in Naquane itself. Due to the small sample and very limited distribution it was not possible to attempt to construct a sexual geography of Naquane, though it has been suggested that sites associated with sexual carvings might have been special areas used for cultic or ceremonial purposes and that the sex scenes depicted in the rock art were at times part of a cultural performance rather than depictions of private acts (Bevan 2006: 159).

While the idea of the sexual acts being performed as part of a ritual performance has been suggested for the Swedish rock art discussed here (e.g. Kaul 1998) it is interesting that phallic or sexual imagery has not been found on the bronze razors which are believed to be connected with male imagery and initiation (*ibid.*, 248). Ships feature so strongly in both the rock carvings and in the razor iconography, which may be due to the ship being ‘the all-embracing symbol of the Bronze Age’, a symbol strongly connected with the rising and journey of the sun (Kaul 1998: 265–270). In contrast, the absence of any phallic representations on the razors may be due to the iconography on them being used to portray beliefs about how the sun and the universe functioned, rather than portraying the rituals as seen in the rock art (Kaul 1998: 248). The opposite is true in the Italian Iron Age since phallic and graphic sexual imagery feature in wall paintings and in the decoration of *situla* and other metalwork (Bevan 2006: 156–157), though comparison is tenuous based on the broad geographic and chronological scope of the available material.

Ships and houses

While images of large phallic warriors proliferate in Scandinavian rock art, often associated with or surrounded by the common ship motifs, the largest of the warriors – the most abnormally large compared to the ships and other motifs – are generally more common in the rock art located furthest away from the Bronze Age shoreline than in the rock art closest to it (Ling 2008: 155; Ling and Cornell 2010: 38, fig. 7, 39, fig. 8, 40; Ling 2012: 482). Ling contrasted the existence on higher ground of ‘the terrestrial sphere’ – as opposed to ‘the maritime sphere’ situated on lower ground near the sea, suggesting that the terrestrial sphere was ‘a space in which more individual actions and positions were of great importance’ (Ling and Cornell 2010, 38, figs 7 and 8). Conversely, the rock art in the maritime sphere in

which 'human representations seem to be more or less proportionate to the ship images' may have 'been produced in accordance with maritime, martial initiation rites' (*ibid.*, 38).

In the Swedish rock carvings ships can be a direct focus for human action or be associated with it. On Tanum 255 for example (Fig. 3.1), though ships are present in quantity and obviously important, their purpose is difficult to determine. On one level they appear to be sailing between the other images like a flotilla, both associated with the action yet strangely apart from it. Kaul interpreted the ships on Tanum 255 as day and night ships for transporting the sun and the human figures as 'ritually fighting, wielding cult-axes to ensure that the sun will really rise and rise as desired, perhaps a little earlier each morning in the spring' (Kaul 1998: 266–267). Whatever the real meaning of these scenes of human agency, which include hostage scenes and various instances of hunting and the killing of animals, they appear to show ritual performances or aspects of such performances. Though predominant on Tanum 255 and in the rock art of the region, the ship is a strangely ambiguous motif which 'may have acted in some way as a collective and unifying feature, but also as a demanding and alienating feature' (Cornell and Ling 2010: 84). The same may be said of the house or hut motif in Valcamonica and certain parallels can be drawn between these two images.

In Valcamonica, the common hut or house motif again provides a focus for activity, but it is also carved over other motifs, perhaps framing them, imposing human culture over the natural world as may rather simplistically be interpreted by the superimposition of buildings over running animals on Rock 35 at Naquane. On the other hand such superimposition may be regarded as a means of appropriating the essence of the earlier motifs within the body of the house. There are also instances of seated figures being shown inside houses in Valcamonica, for example at Ronchi di Zir (Anati 1994: fig. 126, 165) and Cimbergo (Anati and Fradkin 2001: fig. 131, 137). In the latter example the largest house has been superimposed over other images, including a small house, footsoles and armed figures, in addition to the two seated, apparently male figures inside the body of the house, portrayed as if the walls were transparent. Armed figures are often associated with house motifs, usually fighting in pairs outside and around the houses, as seen on Rock 44, for example (Fig. 3.8). On Rock 47 two armed figures are shown fighting inside the upper storey and roofspace of a house (Fig. 3.2). A male figure inside a house on Rock 50 at Naquane appears to be menaced by, or fighting with, a man-sized waterbird lodged inside the roofspace of the house (Fig. 3.3). In view of the common association between waterbirds, death and male martial pursuits, waterbirds might have been connected with a male cult and this house may have been a male cult house, an identification which has been advanced for many of the houses in the rock art of Naquane (Bevan 2006: 126). Elsewhere on Rock 50, another house is associated with a massive partial torso figure (Fig. 3.3) and another partial figure, this time without arms, though with a defined phallus, appears in the roofspace of a house on Rock 11 at Naquane (Bevan 2006: fig. 5.70, 93). Villanovan funerary urns were often made in the shape of huts (Reich 1979: 62–65) and one unprovenanced example dated to c. 800 BC had a small boat at the apex of its roof, a perhaps unique example of the merging of these two symbolic images.

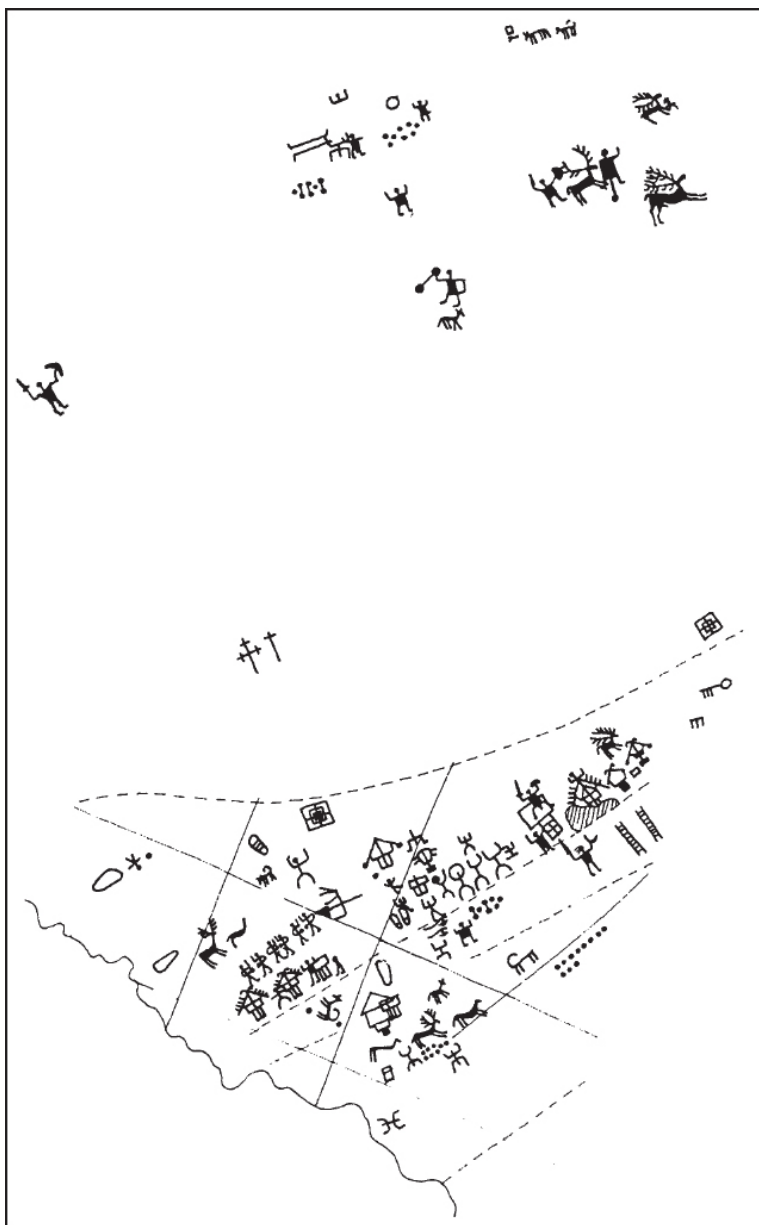


Fig. 3.8. Paired combatants and house motifs on Rock 44, Naquane (after Fusco and Galbiati 1990, 44).

Thus ships and houses – representing maritime and terrestrial environments – provide both a backdrop to and a focus for human action, functioning, probably simultaneously, on both practical and symbolic levels, as our contemporary secular

and religious divide would not have applied in the past. Apart from the mobility of the ship and the essentially static nature of the house, there are many parallels between the two motifs. Ships and houses can vary in size and design; they can contain both people and goods; both can be associated with beliefs and ideas. Perhaps most importantly they can both be associated with different genders. In the rock art of Valcamonica the interior of the house and its immediate surroundings may have become an arena for the construction of gendered identity and transformation during different periods, being associated with both female and male ritual activity and gender-specific cults (Bevan 2006: 167). Houses, logically male cult houses, are associated with several instances of 'paired combatants' – pairs of young warriors presided over by larger warriors who appear to be training them in armed combat (Bevan 2006: 87–91), most notably on Rock 44 at Naquane (Fig. 3.8) although examples also appear on Rocks 47, 50 and 35 (Figs 3.2, 3.3 and 3.12). In the rock art of Bohuslän ships appear to have served a similar purpose as a focus for initiation rites and male pursuits. Male identity and prowess is perhaps no more marked than in the depictions of ships, whether their presence in the rock art is for cosmological, commercial or competitive purposes, or perhaps a combination of all of these (see Ling 2008 for further discussion). The image of the ship brings together concepts of male solidarity and identity, transforming youths to sailor-warriors and individuals into a crew, in a similar way to the young paired combatants being transformed into warriors and ultimately a fighting force in the rock art of Naquane.

Female gendered rituals and motifs in rock art

The female contribution to prehistoric rock art and to ritual has been ignored in some interpretations, most notably that of Tim Yates (1993), and also investigated and found to be lacking, as in the case of Liv Gibbs' study of changing gender relations in the prehistory of Zealand, Denmark (1987). Gibbs considered representations of women to be 'ambiguous or unidentifiable' in the Bronze Age rock art, compared to their high visibility in other media and contexts (Gibbs 1987: 247). However, a number of studies from the late 1980s onwards have supported the existence of mixed sex and exclusively female rituals in the Bronze and Iron Age, as represented in the rock art and other contexts. For example, Helena Victor has presented a powerful argument for female participation in ceremonies and ritual activities in Bronze Age Scandinavia centred on cult houses (1999). Gro Mandt's study of the rock art of Vingen, Norway advanced the theory of female-only and male-only and mixed sex rituals being performed in various areas of the landscape at different times (Mandt 1998; 2001). Rather than interpreting the Bohuslän carvings as portraying male-only rituals, Kristian Kristiansen regarded them, along with small sets of Norwegian bronze statuettes, as serving to illuminate 'the use of ritual gear in large-scale ceremonies performed by the chiefly élites, both male and female' (Kristiansen 1998: 96). There are several known bronze statuettes of women which Kristiansen has described as 'female priests' including one dressed in a short corded skirt, 'doing ritual acrobatics' (*ibid.*, fig. 47a). Another statuette (now lost) of a female figure wearing a long skirt or culottes with a snood or ponytail (*ibid.*, 47c) was very similar in style to the figure presiding over the ritual wedding at Hoghem, which may

suggest that females held priestly office and were represented in rock art in this capacity. The connection between women and ritual wagons (including depositions of horse and wagon-related equipment) during the late Bronze Age has been summarized by Kristiansen (1998: 178–182), and two pairs of long-skirted, arguably female, figures associated with wagons occur in the rock art of Bohuslän at Backa and Rished (Coles 1990: fig. 30b, 53 and fig. 79a, 75).

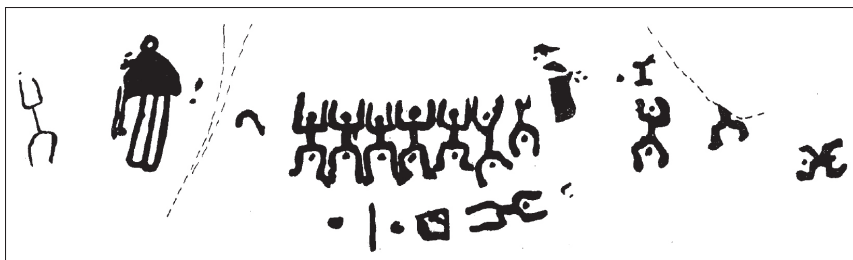


Fig. 3.9. Bronze Age female ritual/dance scene with a possible female cult house on Rock 32, Naquane (after Priuli 1995, 22).

In Valcamonica identifiably female figures are represented in the rock art in several different contexts. They appear in agricultural scenes working alongside male figures, following the plough and bent over in the fields with digging sticks. Occasionally they are shown in sexual scenes. In a few instances they are associated with carvings of looms, though weaving imagery also occurs as decoration in other contemporary media (Bevan 2006: figs 4.52, 4.53, 73–75). Most significantly, female figures feature in Bronze Age carvings of rituals and dances, the best example of which includes the depiction of a bell-shaped building, possibly a female cult house, and is located on Rock 32 at Naquane (Fig. 3.9).

While it is possible therefore to identify females and female-related imagery in the rock art of Naquane, some of which may relate to female involvement in rituals, and also to a lesser extent perhaps in Swedish rock art, not all gender-related imagery is so obvious. Gro Mandt criticized an apparent over-representation of male imagery in northern European rock art, arguing that female gender may have been associated with other rock art images, such as animals, boats and cupmarks which would have made the gender relation between male and female in the rock carvings more equal (Mandt 1986; 1987). The common attribution of maleness to all apparently un-sexed gender neutral figures has been criticized as biased, since it was based on concepts of maleness being associated with action, while females were associated with private and domestic spaces and thus were not being represented in the rock art zones (Englestad 2001). If the inscribing of rock art was part of the celebration of hyper-masculinity, then a lesser representation of female images might in any case be expected.

Gender-associated imagery certainly seems to be present in the Valcamonica rock art, in addition to the sexually-differentiated anthropomorphs in the carvings. While many symbols may have had gender attributions in Valcamonica, most of them appear to be related to masculine gender during the Iron Age (Bevan 2006: 146). Some images, however, appear to be associated with both male and female gender at different times and in different contexts. One example is the ubiquitous

palette symbol (see Figs 3.2–3.3) which I have variously interpreted as a hoe, mirror, ring-handled razor or mortuary shovel based on its similarity to items of Iron Age material culture and its associations in the rock carvings (*ibid.*, 130–134). On Rock 47 large versions of this motif are being held aloft by warriors like battle standards (Fig. 3.2). I have also argued that other common motifs such as the house might relate to either gender and to the existence of male and female cult houses in the rock art zones (Bevan 2006: 144–146). Animals are more difficult to ascribe to one gender or another, as they may be included as real or spiritual entities in their own right. Images of dogs abound in the Valcamonica rock art of all periods, some associated with Bronze Age oranti scenes, some with phallic imagery, and canine sacrifice is a recurring feature in the Iron Age carvings (*ibid.*, 107–116). Interestingly there are also many carvings featuring dogs, and at least one instance of possible canine sacrifice in the rock art of Bohuslän on Tanum 255 where two figures appear to be running a small, large-eared dog through with a spear (Fig. 3.1).

In contrast to the apparently gender-neutral dog, stags appear to be associated with both sexes in rock art and are often shown with phallic imagery in the rock art of Bohuslän and, more notably, in Valcamonica where there appears to be a strong relationship between stags, deer and humans in both the Bronze Age and Iron Age carvings. In the Bronze Age, the animals were associated with both sexes in mixed-sex scenes – interestingly some of the figures have hands shaped like antlers. In the Iron Age stags are associated with male figures in hunting scenes and stags with enlarged antlers are also shown fighting in pairs alongside competing phallic men, drawing a rather obvious parallel between the two species (Bevan 2006: fig. 5.77, 103), as well as in carvings of hybrid man-stag creatures and animal sacrifice (*ibid.*, 102–106, figs 5.76–5.81). On the Great Rock at Naquane images of running stags and deer have been carved around and partly overlapping two separate earlier carvings of female oranti or worshipper figures and three male figures with exaggerated sexual characteristics (Bevan 2006: fig. 5.81, 105). The large-handed motif suggestive of shamanic activity also occurs in both of these scenes. I have argued that the female-orientated carvings were produced by women to commemorate their own rituals, possibly connected with puberty and menstrual seclusion (Bevan 2006: 55–59) based on a number of ethnographic studies featuring the production of art at female sites in the landscape (Teit 1900: 315; Corner 1968: 4; Keyser 1992: 43; Konaté and Le Bris 2002).

An increase in carvings of men and stags in the rock art of Alta, northern Norway has been interpreted as an increasing ‘maleness’ permeating society which might be due to a change from matrilineal to patrilineal descent and male control of animal and human life (Helskog 1995: 258–259). A similar logic might be applied to the later phases of Valcamonica rock art involving phallic men and stags with exaggerated antlers, though these images may be due to Naquane being used as a specifically male ritual space at that time rather than it portraying a completely male-dominated society. However, the deliberate framing of the earlier male and female scenes in the central area of the Great Rock with a herd of running stags and deer, mainly stags with the phallic figures and mainly does with the female figures, appears to be more complex and potentially gender-balanced. The retention, in a sense curation, of this female scene along with the phallic male

carvings at the very centre of a massive panel of carved and over-carved images supports their continued importance during subsequent eras, though their meanings may have changed.

While gender-related imagery in rock art is difficult to identify and even more difficult to interpret, what is the evidence for female gendered rituals in the southern Swedish rock art? Looking at the rock art on the largest and most extensively carved rock art panel at Aspeberget, Tanum in which large phallic warriors with axes and shield-shaped bodies are in the forefront of the composition, flanked by images of ships (Fig. 3.10), identifiably female images are hard to find. However, there are two circular motifs among the carvings, each with eight trident shapes radiating from them, the upper one of which has a long-haired non-phallic figure attached to it. This motif is located above representations of animals – a stag, a horse, bulls and cows, and a ploughman with his plough and oxen – which might be significant. Another version of this motif on Rock 1 (Figs 3.10 and 3.11) is placed next to a pair of footsoles. Are these circular motifs sun symbols or representations of circle dances with the trident-shaped figures representing outstretched arms? Is the long-haired figure a female ritualist? Could these two images be compared to the Bronze Age ritual and dancing scenes of Valcamonica, some of which are female-only and others of which involve both sexes and solar imagery? I have argued that the female ritual scenes of Naquane, one of which was subsequently surrounded and framed by later male martial images on the Great Rock there, were made by women and served to record their female-only rituals in the rock art zones (Bevan 2006: 49–60). In Tanum the images appear to be sexually-mixed and, since the male figures predominate, it could be argued that the carvings are the work of men and that they presented the world, either real or imagined, or perhaps a combination of the two, through the male gaze. On the other hand, a more sexually balanced view could be advanced, with the rock carvings recording beliefs and rituals of equal importance to different age and gender groups, without them being restricted to adult males, possibly sex-specific ceremonies from a cyclical ritual calendar. Interestingly, during the Iron Age at Naquane groups of schematic, probably female, dancing figures, represented as a series of lines with linked arms, appear on several rocks at Naquane. Two such groups appear on the central area of Rock 35 where there are many houses, warriors, including paired combatants, animals and a scene of a blacksmith at his forge (Fig. 3.12). One group is located at the bottom of the central area beneath a running figure and the other group is located to the right of the carvings next to a series of paired combatants. The carving of these collective groups of dancers differs markedly from that of the more detailed Bronze Age female ritual scenes (e.g. Fig. 3.9) and also from that of the male figures and other motifs on Rock 35. Their schematic appearance and their placement among predominantly male-interest carvings argues for male, rather than female, authorship, i.e. that males were representing females during the period when Naquane was a male-gendered space.

T-12 A

Detalj 2

Detalj 3

Detalj 4

Detalj 5

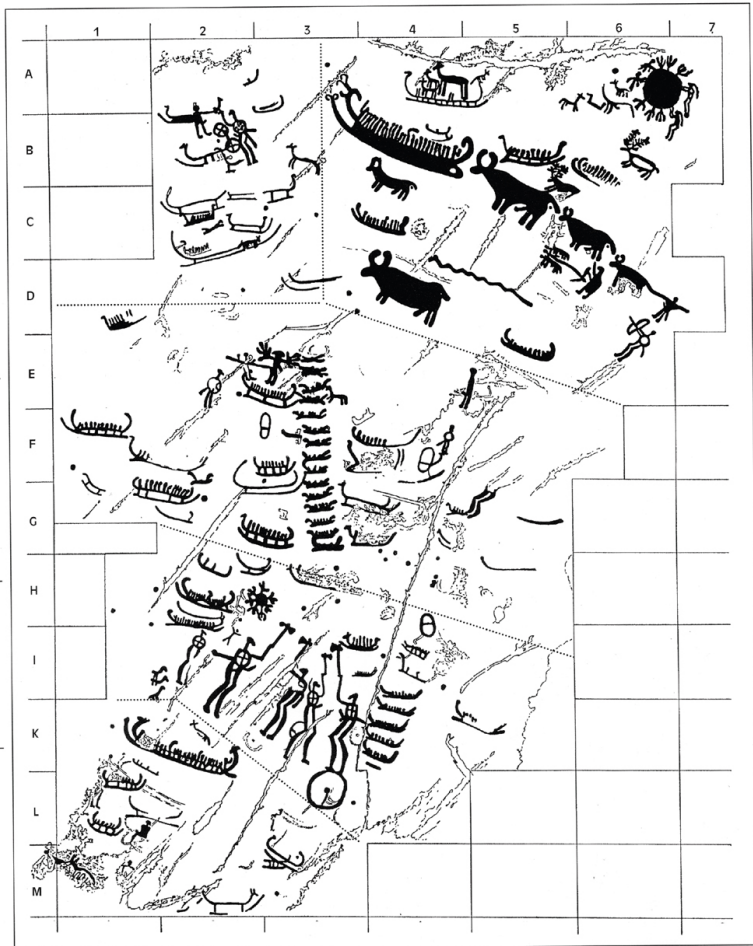


Fig. 3.10. Phallic warriors and ships on the large panel at Aspeberget, Tanum (source: Gerhard Milstreu, Tanums hällristningsmuseum).

Gender-related imagery in northern Italian and Swedish rock art, though complex and in many cases ambiguous, offers considerable potential for further research. Due to the marked similarities in the rock art from these two very different areas, future research could involve detailed comparison of the two rock art assemblages, focusing on the nature and associations of phallic imagery and sexual behaviour noted in the rock art, the evidence for gendered ritual, and the various manifestations of human activity associated with images of ships and houses. Research might also focus on the many recurring images which seem to have had male and female gender associations, including depictions of animals, principally dogs and stags, footsoles, partial figures, figures with upraised arms associated with cupmarks, figures with large hands and masked and costumed

figures in the rock art. Comparison with other contemporary material culture, votive deposits, settlement and burial data and so forth might then allow a 'thicker description', or perhaps a more nuanced description, of past and present societies (Goldhahn and Fuglesvedt 2012: 254–255).



Fig. 3.11. Detail from large panel at Aspeberget showing a circular motif associated with a possible female figure (author's photograph).

Framing and curation in rock art

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the carvings from Valcamonica is how earlier carvings have been incorporated into later areas of carving and how certain rocks have been re-used over time. The best example of this is on the Great Rock at Naquane where one of the female oranti scenes and a male oranti scene featuring exaggerated phallic imagery have become surrounded by later images of stags, deer and male martial imagery. The deliberate surrounding of the earlier imagery with the later imagery underlined the importance of the Bronze Age ritual scenes which I believe were being actively curated as a way of referring to the past, perhaps to creation myths and stories. Far from being ignored or obliterated by over-carving they were accorded a central place on the Great Rock, surrounded by carvings of warriors and battle scenes from various phases of the Iron Age, which acted as a frame for the Bronze Age images. However, the act of framing images is by no means straightforward. Framing can also be seen as a way of containing images and re-presenting them within a different context, perhaps making them appear safe and suitable for public consumption. In this way the female images on the Great Rock may have been reinterpreted as creation myths from the past rather

than recording private female rituals in a private female space as seen on Rock 32 (Fig. 3.9). The phallic male images may be a later addition, along with the stag and deer 'frame' brought in to appropriate some control of fertility or at least to equalize the gender balance.



Fig. 3.12. Two groups of female dancers on Rock 35, Naquane (after Fusco and Galbiati 1990, loose sheet).

While the phenomenon of the framing and curation of earlier rock art imagery within later rock art panels does not appear to have taken place in the Tanum area, there is increasing archaeological evidence to support the re-use of various Bronze Age rock art sites in southern Sweden during the Early Iron Age (Bertilsson 1987; Nilsson 2010). By burying their dead at Bronze Age rock art sites Bertilsson suggested that Iron Age people were 'striving for connection with old beliefs and cults', expressing 'respect for the ancestors' and 'the continuous claim to adjacent territories' (Bertilsson 1987). Logically, a similar ideology may have applied in Iron Age Valcamonica when earlier female ritual scenes were deliberately incorporated into later rock art panels featuring predominantly male figures and pursuits, though the underlying reasons for this may have been far more complex and nuanced. Rather than being celebrated in a nostalgic way as portraying stories of origin myths, perhaps the older images were being subverted or reinterpreted in the service of a new socio-religious or socio-sexual regime (Bevan 2006: 168–169).

Pivotal to my discussion of the rock art at Naquane were questions of who made the art and who the intended audience was, as well as whether rock art related to different gender groups within society and therefore affected their relative social status, as well as their access to the rock art zones (*ibid.*, 169). The reuse of the Swedish rock art sites described by Nilsson is very different to that at Naquane, since rock art was no longer being produced during the Iron Age in Sweden, something which may have led to the Iron Age people regarding the rock art as symbols made by the ancestors (Nilsson 2010: 166). That rock art was being deliberately buried under layers of fire-cracked stones collected from nearby hearths suggests a more problematic relationship between past and present, with perhaps the ancestors who made the rock art being regarded as 'other' (*ibid.*, 166–167). Therefore, reuse of rock art sites in the landscape in different periods,

whether as re-carving of the rock art panels, the revisiting of the sites or the concealing of the rock art, can have a number of potential different reasons, which may or may not have been connected to gender. If the carvings represented images celebrating hypermasculinity perhaps such images were no longer acceptable or credible in later societies.

A common assumption in rock art studies is that rock carvings were the work of local people who inhabited the landscape, and that the carvings recorded their own rituals and histories, and perhaps their own foundation myths and legends. Rock carvings like those of southern Sweden are usually interpreted as linking people with the land (Coles 2003: 248) and perhaps of legitimizing their continued presence in a particular place, as well as projecting the very essence of their society both backwards and forwards in time. I would argue that rather than celebrating the established culture of a long-lived social group, rock carving may have been an attempt to legitimize the right to a land conquered by force, the previous occupants now ousted, murdered or enslaved, even to celebrate the martial exploits of a new regime. Past carvings may have been reused, reinterpreted and revisited in the service of a new regime, becoming incorporated in an ongoing palimpsest of scenes and motifs, creating a collage of changing meanings.

A pivotal question is whether the construction of gender identities as seen in the rock art reflected social and cultural realities or religious expression, perhaps incorporating images of deities and scenes from myths. In his study of the maritime aspects of the northern Bohuslän rock carvings, Ling saw 'no contradiction between a social and a mythological view of rock art', suggesting that its manufacture might be viewed 'as a socio-religious act involving the depiction of highly staged objects and socio-religious situations' (Ling 2012: 469). While rock art was a social articulation it was not a direct description of social matters, values and relations but a distorted and idealized depiction of a social world (*ibid.*, 469). Ling's ideas about rock art as a potentially subversive medium for portraying the world in a particular, though not necessarily accurate, way is particularly interesting when considering the gendered, hyper-masculine, aspects of the rock art. What was the purpose of these distorted portrayals of phallic warriors accompanied by the recurring images of the ship in northern Bohuslän and the house in Valcamonica? Was the rock art used to control or influence an uncertain, possibly hostile Bronze Age world and to create group cohesion by commemorating rituals, deities and past glories at specific important places? Did it establish social, geographic and ideological boundaries or was it intended to be part of a process of deliberately blurring such boundaries? It is clear that these pictures and their arrangement were not simply arbitrary or random but rather a deliberate and potentially symbolic cyclical use and reuse of images. Individual carvings may have had some kind of emotional currency that led to their curation as signifying mediation between past and present, and the subverting of linear time. The celebration of gender difference in the rock art and of a rampant hyper-masculinity may not have mirrored contemporary society and might have provided such sites with a built in cultural obsolescence that inevitably arose from their attempted subversion of gender relationships.

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Mixed media, mixed messages: religious transmission in Bronze Age Scandinavia

Richard Bradley

One of the problems of considering the visual imagery of Bronze Age Scandinavia is that it is found in more than one medium. This paper compares the character and chronology of ancient rock art with that of decorated metalwork. Following the work of the cognitive anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse, it suggests that they were associated with two different ways of expressing and transmitting religious beliefs in the past. Each may have been employed by a different kind of society.

KEYWORDS: Rock art, metalwork, razors, initiation ceremonies, religious transmission, long-distance contacts

Mixed media

This paper considers two groups of visual images in the Bronze Age of south Scandinavia. The first is found on decorated metalwork, in particular razors, and the second consists of rock carvings. Their distributions overlap in time and space, and the article explores the relationship between them.

This approach is by no means new, for it is the established sequence of decorated metalwork that provides a chronology for many of the rock carvings (Kaul 1998: chaps 5 and 6). Petroglyphs can also be dated where they portray recognisable types of artefacts (Malmer 1981) or where the positions of different panels can be related to changes in the shoreline (Ling 2008). Drawings of ships provide the main source of information as they are shared between bronze artefacts and designs in the open air. This approach has been followed for a long time, but a second issue is easily overlooked. Why should the same images be represented in such different media?

The comparison is especially important in regions where the distribution of decorated metalwork overlaps with that of rock carvings (Fig. 4.1). It happens in

Denmark and southern Sweden (Malmer 1981; Kaul 1998), although examples in both these media occur in smaller numbers further to the south in Germany (Capelle 2008). In the opposite direction the rock carvings extend beyond the main distribution of the bronzes and are found with some frequency as far as sub-Arctic Norway (Sognnes 1998; 2001). If the distributions of images in these media show a limited geographical overlap, the same may apply to their chronologies. Stylistic arguments suggest that carvings of ships were quite common early in the Bronze Age, but most of the decorated artefacts date from the later part of this period. In the south, and particularly in Denmark, Glob (1969) suggested that rock carvings were made less often once decorated razors were used. In the north, however, such artefacts were scarce and petroglyphs have a longer chronology. Their production may have increased in the Late Bronze Age and extended into the Iron Age (Sognnes 2001; Ling 2008).

There are obvious differences between the images in these media. Although some of the drawings on metalwork are naturalistic, other depictions of boats and animals can be extremely schematic. They are also very small, meaning that they could only have been viewed one at a time. Most of the elements appear singly or in limited numbers, although the pictures of ships are sometimes paired. A few designs are associated with personal ornaments which might have been on show at special occasions, but the majority are on razors. These artefacts are usually found with cremation burials, but they were not new when they were deposited (Kaul 1998: 150).

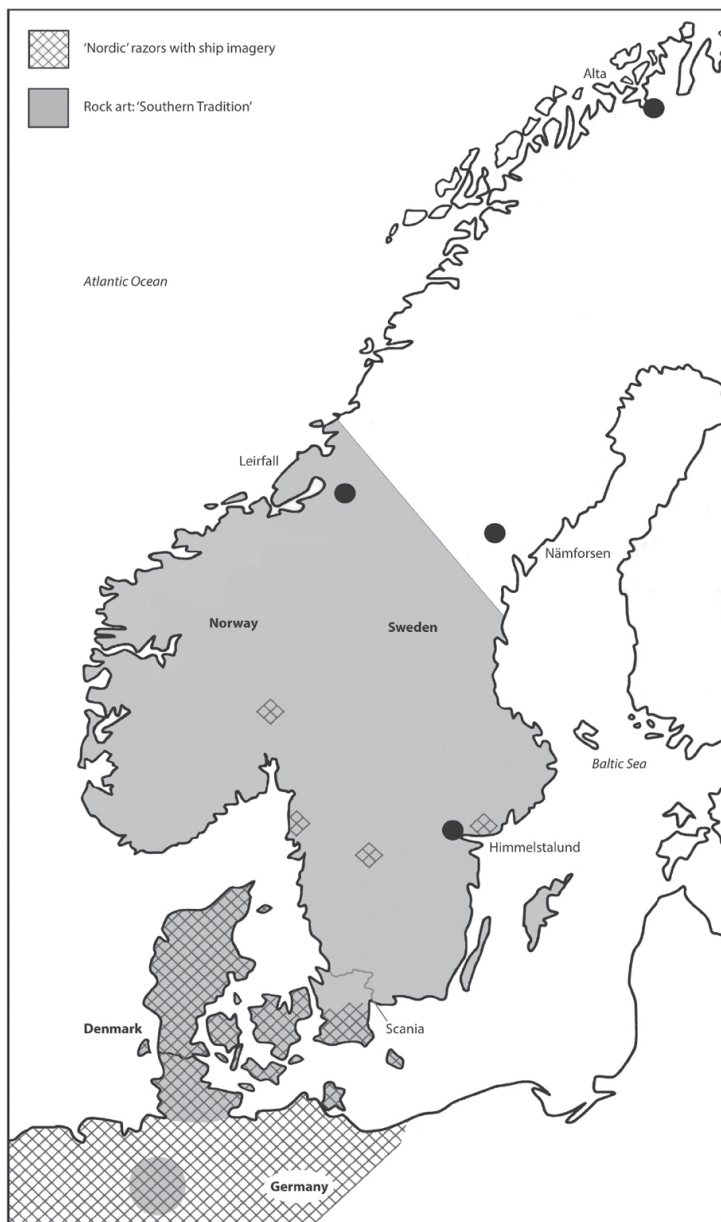


Fig. 4.1. Outline distribution of decorated razors and the rock art of the South Scandinavian Bronze Age (drawing: Courtney Nimura).

Although rock carvings contain some of the same elements, in particular drawings of ships, animals, sea creatures and the sun, they are displayed on a completely different scale. Moreover, these elements can be repeated many times,

so that entire fleets appear on the decorated outcrops. By contrast, most of the boats on bronze razors are shown only once. The carvings can be extensive and were in accessible locations where a significant number of people could have viewed them simultaneously. The same elements could be repeated from one group of carvings to another, even when they were made on a single site. In many cases it would be necessary for the viewer to move around the decorated surface in order to appreciate the full variety of the drawings. It is a moot point how many were visible at any one time, as some outcrops were carved at intervals extending over a thousand years. In contrast to the decorated metalwork, many of these images could be renewed or altered during subsequent phases.

Recent excavations suggest that some of the decorated rocks should not be viewed in isolation. They were associated with walled or fenced enclosures, low platforms and deposits of fire-cracked stone (Bengtsson 2004; Kaul 2006). Certain petroglyphs were beside or under cairns, but it is not clear how often this happened. Artefacts have been found at, and close to, these sites (Goldhahn 2012), and it is likely that large numbers of people gathered there.

Mixed messages

Because so much attention has been paid to the drawings of ships shared between rock carvings and metalwork, it is easy to overlook the contrasts between them. The decorated razors feature a limited variety of decorative schemes, but in Denmark they conform to a series of weakly defined regional traditions (Kaul 1998: 125–130). The rock carvings have a more varied repertoire. They also conform to distinctive local styles. For instance, weapons are especially common along the Baltic coastline in Scania and Östergötland, outsize human figures are a special feature of Bohuslän, and foot soles are most often depicted near to Trondheim (Malmer 1981).

There is a striking contrast between the images in these media. The decorated razors contain a small number of distinctive elements: a boat, or boats; a symbol which apparently represents the sun; horses, birds and fish; and a snake (or possibly an eel). However they are interpreted, these elements refer to two domains: the sky and the sea (Kaul 1998; 2004). Apart from the crews on board the boats, there are no human beings, and some of the creatures depicted in this medium are directly associated with these vessels. Thus their prows can be embellished with the heads of horses or birds.

That is very different from the rock carvings of the same age which contain a wider variety of images. Some elements are shared with the decorated bronzes. Again a number of have been interpreted as drawings of the sun (Kaul 2004). Ships figure prominently among these designs and have animal or bird heads on the prow. Vessels are shown with their crews (although others are entirely empty), but fish and snakes or eels are rare. Instead these designs contain a variety of portable artefacts – hafted axes and swords – and wild and domestic animals, including cattle, dogs, horses, pigs and deer. As well as seagoing vessels there are carts. There are also what appear to be naturalistic scenes, showing hunting, fighting and ploughing. Human beings feature in many of the panels. Only rarely are they represented on a large scale, but rows and pairs of footprints may have been drawn at full size. Again they have no equivalent among the metalwork.

Despite such variation, many of the panels share a common element. Although they depict the sea and the sky in a similar manner to the decorated artefacts, they also emphasize the importance of *activities taking place on land*. Thus the bronzes depict two domains, and the rock carvings show three (Fig. 4.2; Bradley 2006, 2009: 162–165).

Flemming Kaul has shown how the pictures on the metalwork can be interpreted (1998: chap. 11). They appear to depict the travels of the sun through the sky during the day and beneath the sea at night. At different points on its journey it is helped on its way by various creatures – the sun-horse, a fish and a ‘snake’. ‘Day ships’ cross the sky from left to right, whilst ‘night ships’ travel below the water from right to left. In certain of the pictures the sun is shown as it is transferred from one kind of vessel to the other.

The designs on individual artefacts feature particular stages in that cycle. Only where a day ship is paired with a night ship can the full sequence be summarized on a single object, and that is comparatively rare. On the other hand, it seems as if all the drawings found on decorated metalwork *illustrate sections of the same story*. Minor stylistic traits distinguish the razors from different parts of Denmark, but they concern the precise ways in which these details are rendered. They do not record separate narratives. In this medium the images themselves are tiny and the message is always the same.

The Bronze Age rock art of south Scandinavia gives a different impression. It is conceived on a far larger scale, and individual elements can be repeated numerous times. The repertoire is considerably more varied. The decorated panels may have taken shape over many years, and the oldest designs may have been modified or superseded by new ones. Although the drawings of ships resemble those on metal artefacts, the designs themselves are more naturalistic. That certainly applies to the depictions of artefacts, animals and people which are peculiar to this medium. It is also true of some of the scenes on the decorated outcrops which include people walking in procession across the surface of the stone.

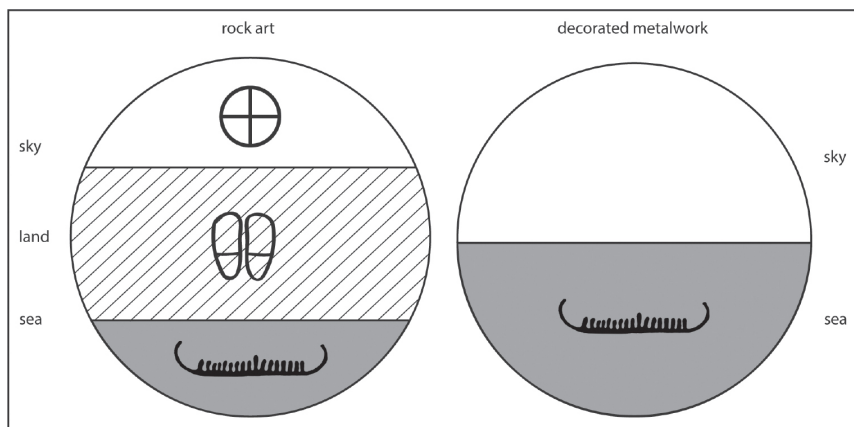


Fig. 4.2. Contrasts between the domains represented in South Scandinavian rock art (left) and decorated razors (right). The metalwork features the sea and the sky, while the carved surfaces also feature the land (drawing: Courtney Nimura).

Some of these elements do resemble the images associated with metalwork. There may be drawings of the sun, 'day ships' and 'night ships', and occasionally they are associated with drawings of animals (Bradley 2006; 2009: chap. 7). Just as often the pictures include elements that are absent from the other medium. Not all the images refer to the solar cosmology illustrated by the bronzes, and in any case drawings of ships are uncommon in inland areas where foot soles, carts and wheel crosses (themselves interpreted as sun symbols) are represented.

Many of these scenes are located on land and show little consistency from one panel to another. Although they make use of similar elements, it is difficult to identify a single overarching theme. Instead, individual scenes duplicate one another, their contents overlap, and elements that are normally found in association can also occur on their own. Sometimes the panels illustrate different events, but more often their contents share some features in common, as if each story was making reference to others, or the separate pictures represented distinct parts of a single narrative. Few stories may have been represented in their entirety, and it seems more likely that the petroglyphs represented pivotal episodes in a tale, or tales, that were already familiar. In some cases they were separated by events that were not shown, or were illustrated in other places. Certain panels may have been organised like a strip cartoon whose component parts had to be inspected in the correct order for the story to be understood. That may be why they exhibit so much variation and overlap.

The decorated razors work in a similar way, for most of them depict only one stage in the solar cycle. Some show the sun crossing the sky, others illustrate its journey beneath the sea, and a few examples depict the point at which it is transferred from a day ship to a night ship, or vice versa. The main contrast with the rock carvings is that the decorated artefacts are found singly, with only one in any particular burial. Kaul's interpretation brings together illustrations of artefacts which might never have been assembled at the same location during the Bronze Age (1998: fig. 170). By contrast, the sheer abundance of visual images among the petroglyphs means that the contents of different panels could be interpreted and compared directly.

These contrasts between rock art and decorated metalwork may relate to other features of Scandinavian prehistory. There is the striking contrast between portable artefacts which represent the sea and the sky, and decorated outcrops which feature events taking place on land. To some extent their distributions contrast with one another. The decorated bronzes are generally found towards the south and are related to Late Bronze Age artefacts elsewhere in northern and central Europe. Some of the most elaborate rock carvings are recorded in regions further to the north.

It is clear that by the Early Bronze Age communities in Germany already showed a concern with the sky and the heavenly bodies (Meller and Bertemes 2010). They also placed a special emphasis on ships which may have played a significant role in an ancient cosmology. That is evident from the Nebra sky disk and perhaps the Wismar horn, the date of which is more difficult to establish (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005: 194–195). Those concerns became still more obvious during the Urnfield period when communities in northern and central Europe buried their dead with model boats which included depictions of birds and the sun (Kossack 1954). It is obvious that people in Denmark and southern Sweden were influenced

by these ideas. Kaul suggests that it is why the same elements feature on decorated razors.

By contrast, many of the rock carvings depict not two but three levels. Again this may be related to a more widespread tradition, although its dating is unclear. Knut Helskog (1999) has argued that the siting of Arctic rock art illustrates the importance of a three-tier cosmology in which decorated surfaces were created at the shoreline because it was where the land met the sea and where both elements came into contact with the sky. Here it was possible to communicate between separate worlds. That idea is supported by ethnographic evidence from more recent periods (Zvelebil and Jordan 1999; Jordan 2011). It would certainly explain why so many of the most complex panels in the Southern Tradition of rock art are also located close to lakes, rivers and the coast. Just as important, it is consistent with Kalle Sognnes's idea that this style of images originated in the west of Norway where the first carvings of boats bear a certain resemblance to those created by late hunter-gatherers (Sognnes 1998; 2011). There is a problem because the chronology of the Northern tradition of rock carvings is uncertain. On the other hand, there are a few sites where drawings in both styles are juxtaposed, suggesting that people were aware of the older tradition even if it was no longer in use (Wrigglesworth 2006; Sognnes 2008; Nyland 2011). A more fundamental observation rests on surer ground, for this was a region where a precedent existed for creating panels of rock art. Further to the south, where older petroglyphs were limited to the cup marks on the capstones of chambered tombs, decorated metalwork had a greater part to play.

The medium and the message

How were these images employed? The decorated razors are found in graves. It is tempting to suggest that they were used to prepare the body for the funeral, but the condition of the blades shows that they had a longer history. They may have been used for shaving from adolescence onwards. More research is needed on the bones associated with these artefacts, but this interpretation suggests that the metalwork played a role in rituals celebrating the life course.

To some extent the same may be true of the decorated outcrops, but in this case the argument concerns only one aspect of how these places were used. A feature that is peculiar to Bronze Age rock art is the depiction of footprints or foot soles. They take at least two different forms. Some of them seem to indicate paths leading up and down the surface of an outcrop, but others are in pairs and may mark the positions of people standing on the decorated rock (Bradley 2009: 195–197). In both cases they are thought to be life size. The imprints are too large to be associated with any of the men or women portrayed in the drawings, and yet these distinctive motifs have more or less the same dimensions throughout their distribution, which extends from South Scandinavia to the edge of Arctic Norway (Sognnes 2011). Their uniformity is so striking that they may have been modelled on the feet of living people. If so, there is a problem, for the foot soles are too small to be those of adults; it seems more likely that they were associated with the young (Hauptmann Wahlgren 2002: 223–229). Is it possible that the carved footprints refer to initiation ceremonies? They may have choreographed performances taking place on top of the rock, stipulating where and how the

participants should stand, and the paths that processions should follow.

Again it is worth comparing the images on decorated metalwork with the rock art of the Bronze Age. Both these interpretations share some common elements. The first is that they emphasise the role of young people. In Kaul's interpretation, razors were presented to boys on their initiation as adults (1998: 154–155). It was when adolescents first shaved that they became full members of society and were instructed about the workings of the cosmos. Those beliefs accompanied them all their lives, and the decorated artefacts which summarized those ideas went with them to the grave. That would explain why in Scania these artefacts are associated with men's burials (Arcini *et al.* 2007: 144). Studies of the carved footprints, on the other hand, may also have been associated with young people, for in most cases they are too small to be those of adults.

There is a further link between these media. The decorated bronzes summarise a complex narrative concerned with the movement of the sun (Kaul 2004). A number of the carved footprints occur in pairs as if they mark the positions of people standing on the decorated surface. A sample of carved rocks where the published records contain a north point suggests that the paired foot soles show where individuals could observe the sun's position between dawn and dusk (Bradley 2009: 195–197). That may be why few examples were orientated between north-west and northeast, as those are the directions where it cannot be seen.

The narrative illustrated by the metalwork not only represents the sun and sky, it portrays their relationship to the sea. Again a similar argument may apply to the rock carvings. Two points are significant here. The first is that drawings of ships are normally found close to water. Like the decorated panels discussed by Helskog (1999), they are where the land, the sky and the sea come into contact, although in this case the argument extends to major rivers and lakes. All the elements depicted on the metalwork are represented in these locations. Further inland, however, ships are rare and often absent, and the commonest designs are foot soles, and the circular images which have been interpreted as drawings of the sun.

A transect between the Baltic and the Atlantic encapsulates the contrast with the rock art on the coast (Fig. 4.3). Where the sun rises from, or over the sea, ships are usually represented, and the same applies to the bodies of water into which it sets. Where it passes over land some distance away from the shoreline, these vessels are rarely shown. Instead the emphasis is on solar symbols. In each location pairs of carved footprints mark the positions from which the sun can be observed. The carvings illustrate some of the same elements as the decorated bronzes, but they were in places from which the stages in the process could be observed on the ground. The character and orientation of the carved footprints suggest that young people might have been initiated into that knowledge.



Fig. 4.3. An imaginary transect between the Baltic and the Atlantic illustrating the contrast between the dominant images in Bronze Age rock art. Ships are found beside the water, as are foot soles and drawings of the sun. They also occur in inland areas of south Scandinavia where boats are rarely represented (drawing: Courtney Nimura).

There is a third connection between the drawings found on decorated artefacts and some of the major rock carvings. Late Bronze Age razors are associated with cremation burials. They may have been used to prepare the corpse for display on the funeral pyre, but these artefacts had been used before. They were not burnt together with the body, which is why the decoration still survives. Even so, the history of the decorated metalwork came to an end once the dead were consumed by fire.

The same happened to a few of the rock carvings. The outcrops with similar motifs to the razors can be associated with evidence of burnt stone and patches of blistered rock (Bengtsson 2004; Kaul 2006). It is possible that a few of these sites were used for cremating the dead, but they could have been connected with other rituals that involved the burning of fires. They may have been accompanied by the preparation of food, but the cracking of the stone in the heat would have had a dramatic effect. At times it impinged on the decorated surfaces and damaged or destroyed the pictures. There are even cases in which these designs were buried beneath deposits of heat-shattered rock. Similar practices are well known from the excavation of burnt mounds and cult houses. It is a moot point whether the lighting of so many fires evoked the warmth and light of the sun, but the possibility is worth considering.

Again it is important to emphasise the contrasts between these different media. The passage of the sun is perhaps the only narrative illustrated by the decorated metalwork. It may have been addressed to a specific audience, and objects with this kind of decoration were nearly always deposited with cremation burials. Bronze Age rock art was not subject to this limitation. Although it shares some common elements with the drawings on prehistoric artefacts, it contains other features that are peculiar to this medium and cannot be interpreted in these terms. Its visual repertoire is altogether wider and it is likely that that it was employed in many other ways. The significance of the solar cycle was only one concern of the people who made it.

There was a special emphasis on the commemoration of the dead. It extended from the middle of the second millennium BC to at least the middle of the first. In this case it is evidenced in several media, from cist slabs and decorated kerbstones (Goldhahn 1999; Jellestad Syvertsen 2002) to the siting of barrows and cairns above the carved outcrops (Goldhahn 2012). It is equally evident from the metalwork, much of which dates from the Late Bronze Age, for artefacts embellished with drawings of ships and the sun were normally deposited in graves. In fact there are other links between these elements, although they are much less common. At a few sites it seems as if files of carved footprints lead from the edge of a mound or even the position of a pyre down the contours of the rock towards a bog or pool. Other carvings of footprints can cluster around the margins of these monuments, and more may be covered by these structures (Bradley 2009: 190–191; Goldhahn 2012). An interesting variant of these patterns is recorded at Leirfall in the west of Norway, where a series of separate panels depicting human

footprints extend uphill as far as a distinctive outcrop decorated with an unusual design. The same motifs are associated with cist slabs in the burial cairns of the same region (Sognnes 2011).

Accounts of both these media inevitably focus on those elements which can be interpreted, at the expense of others whose significance is lost. As a result, the importance of the sun and the dead dominates most discussions and other possibilities are less often considered. That is inevitable, but another way of looking at the relationship between these images and ancient beliefs is to consider how religious concepts were learned. Here the analysis can draw on some of the elements already mentioned in this paper. Were those pictures addressed to a large audience or just a single individual? Was only one story being illustrated, or were there many separate and overlapping narratives? Did those stories differ from each region to its neighbours, or were their contents the same across large areas? And what were the contexts in which the images were first created, used and (in some instances) destroyed? Here the discussion turns to the remaining element in the title of this paper: the question of religious transmission in Bronze Age Scandinavia.

Table 4.1. The characteristics of the doctrinal mode of religiosity, compared with those of decorated razors. The first two columns quote Whitehouse’s own description (2004). The most striking interpretations are italicised.

The message is of a type that is common to many other cultures	Highly specific and often unique to a particular culture
Learned through a single event, involving only one person	Learned through a series of events, involving many people
Presented in a simple and direct manner	Presented in a complex and indirect manner
Religious ideas are transmitted through a single but complex cosmology	Religious ideas are transmitted through a complex cosmology
Religious ideas are transmitted through a single narrative	Religious ideas are transmitted through a complex narrative

Religious transmission

The cognitive anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse (2004) has discussed what he calls ‘modes of religiosity’. His concern is how beliefs are expressed and how they can be learned. He distinguishes between two models, each of which occurs in a different social context. One is ‘imagistic’ and the other is ‘doctrinal’. The contrast between them depends on a number of characteristics: the frequency with which religious ideas are transmitted, the level of arousal that this process involves, the means by which the significance of rituals can be conveyed, and the various media through which they are expressed. His analysis depends on cross cultural analysis, but his main concern is with the operation of memory. How are beliefs assimilated and how are they recalled? Because he is interested in human cognition he feels justified in comparing different societies with one another.

The *doctrinal* mode is where the same religious ideas are expressed on a regular basis but do not have a significant impact on the senses. In this case the messages are schematic or formulaic; sometimes they are set out in written texts, but that is not essential. It is through such codes that important beliefs are organised and assimilated. In Whitehouse’s model such doctrines possess a logical structure which can sometimes be expressed as a narrative. The contents of such narratives spread rapidly and remain the same over considerable areas.

The *imagistic* mode is different. In this case religious rituals occur occasionally,

but when they do happen they are traumatic events. In this case it is the drama that is recalled. It happens episodically, and such intense experiences give rise to memories that come to mind spontaneously long afterwards. Their contents can be extremely varied. Again they may be transmitted in visual form, but the images themselves may be subject to more than one interpretation. They can also vary from place to place. Whitehouse considers that the contrast between these models reflects a fundamental difference between the societies in which they occur. The doctrinal mode is associated with communities with centralised social structures and leaders who can include ritual specialists. The imagistic mode is associated with societies without these characteristics.

When he put forward this scheme Whitehouse emphasised the way in which one mode of religious transmission might develop into the other. The change from an imagistic model to a doctrinal framework seemed to be related to a process of social change. In particular, he discussed the impact of writing. His more recent work has moved away from an evolutionary framework, stressing how elements of both modes of religiosity can coexist among the same group of people (Whitehouse and Hodder 2010). Sometimes, he says, the doctrinal model breaks down, to be replaced by the imagistic mode. For that reason it is not necessary to suppose that they should always appear in the same sequence.

The contrast between the doctrinal and imagistic models is similar to that between decorated metalwork and petroglyphs, which certainly coexisted in some regions of Scandinavia during the Late Bronze Age. It is worth comparing Whitehouse’s characterization with the empirical evidence from Northern Europe.

Table 4.1 considers the *doctrinal* mode of religiosity; Table 4.2 considers the *imagistic* mode of religiosity. Several features stand out. The drawings on Bronze Age metalwork are extremely stereotyped and were executed on such a small scale that they must have been addressed to particular individuals. It may be that they received the razors on their initiation as adults. Those images summarise a single but complex narrative concerned with the movements of the sun. Such objects were heavily worn and must have been used many times (Kaul 1998: 150). They were obviously so important that they were buried with the dead. They are not found in all male graves, which means that someone must have decided who should receive them and when and where it should happen. Despite some evidence for the existence of regional styles, the basic narrative was always the same. In that sense it can be described as a *doctrine*.

Table 4.2. The characteristics of the imagistic mode of religiosity, compared with those of the decorated razors. The first two columns quote Whitehouse’s own description (2004). The most striking interpretations are italicised.

Does it usually represent the decorated outcrops?	
Do they often performances including solar observations and the use of fire. Initiation, mortuary rituals and other rites of passage	
Do they illustrate the role of the sun in events at the decorated outcrops, including the shattering of the rock in the heat?	
Do they provide interpretations of events and images at the decorated rocks	
Do they represent the interaction between decorated panels on, and between, the different sites	

The drawings executed on rock outcrops overlap with some of these images, but

they were much more diverse. In this case it is impossible to identify one master narrative. Moreover, the same elements were repeated at intervals, and many of these sites may have been visited episodically over a long period of time. It was then that certain of the carved panels were renewed, but it is by no means obvious whether existing petroglyphs retained their power or whether they were replaced. The layout of the decorated surfaces suggests that such places attracted a considerable audience.

As Flemming Kaul has observed, they were where public rituals were conducted (1998: chap. 11) – a very different phenomenon from the restricted circulation of images on decorated artefacts. They must have served a variety of different purposes, from ceremonies that addressed the sun to initiation rites, and from cremation pyres to memorials where the remains of the dead were deposited. Such events would have had a strong emotional impact. The lighting of fires and the cracking of the rock would only have added to the drama, and all these elements could have been recalled long afterwards. The sheer variety of images and activities associated with these places would have made it difficult to enforce a uniform set of beliefs, and it may be why the rock art of South Scandinavia was more diverse than the drawings on Late Bronze Age metalwork.

Is it possible to take the discussion further? Whitehouse would contend that each of his modes of religiosity is associated with a different kind of society, but there are risks in placing so much weight on models which depend on cross-cultural generalisation. It is advisable to employ a wider range of archaeological evidence. In that case two questions arise.

This study has emphasised a number of contrasts between artefacts and rock art, but they may not have remained the same throughout the Bronze Age. Although the decorated outcrops have a lengthy history, there are comparatively few objects with similar decoration before about 1100 BC (Kaul 1998: chap. 6). Does this mean that comparisons between these media do not apply until then? One way forward would be to study the petroglyphs which can be dated to the Early Bronze Age. Do they have a different vocabulary from their later counterparts? Were the visual images less diverse, and is it possible that they had more of the stereotyped character that Whitehouse (2004) associates with his doctrinal mode? The question is important because the nature of social organisation during this period is coming under scrutiny (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005: chap. 4; Vandkilde 2007: chap. 6).

Similarly, it is important to pay more attention to the spatial and chronological distributions of images during the Late Bronze Age. Was Glob (1969) right to suggest that rock carvings became less important once metalwork with similar designs became more widely available? To what extent did drawings in both media coexist in the same areas, and are there indications that societies were organised differently in regions where rock art was the principal medium? This is a question that has already been asked in Bohuslän (Skoglund 2009). Were the settlements, burials and votive deposits more uniform in the south where the decorated artefacts share many features in common? And was there more variation in those regions where the rock art was most diverse? To investigate these questions Early Bronze Age petroglyphs must be compared directly with those of later date, and it will be important to identify any changes that took place on individual sites during their periods of use.

The dialogue between interpretation and evidence continues. Both these questions return to the chronological issues with which the paper began.

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Walking on the stones of years. Some remarks on the north-west Iberian rock art

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Had you talked to the winds of time? [...]

Had you walked on the stones of years?

'Stones of years' (Emerson, Lake & Palmer, © 1971 Atlantic Recording Corporation)

Over the last two decades, the traditional descriptive paradigm has given way to other views focusing on the relationship between petroglyphs and prehistoric landscapes, seeking to understand that artistic phenomenon in the framework of societies undergoing deep socioeconomic changes and altering environments.

We shall review, in the light of recent discoveries, aspects such as the chronology of the regional rock art, the audience it was meant to address and the archaeological context of the carved rocks. Going beyond the perception of rock art as a mediating element, open to the different communities inhabiting the land, we acknowledge its possible role as an active agent through which human groups might negotiate their own identity and association with the surrounding space. The relationship between petroglyphs and landscape would be a dialectic one, so that a variety of factors could regulate access and the reading of the decorated panels, perhaps restricting these to certain individuals or sectors of a given community. Lastly, parallels in the rock art from other areas of Atlantic Europe may be just another example of the circulation along the seaways of goods, ideas and people, at least from the Early Neolithic.

KEYWORDS: Galician rock art, Chalcolithic, Bronze Age, landscape, audience, archaeological context, Atlantic connections

The state of the art

Nearly 150 years have passed since the first scientific observations of the Galician petroglyphs, leading to an endless flow of references and the construction of a

catalogue – by no means definitive – of over 3000 sites known today. This was not just a local endeavour: renowned foreign archaeologists such as H. Obermaier (1925), E. MacWhite (1951), E. Anati (1968) and, recently, R. Bradley (1997) have given this topic attention, often producing interpretations that significantly advanced the subject, if sometimes with a degree of controversy.

Up to the last decade of the twentieth century, petroglyphs were seen as little more than artistic objects and were analysed in total isolation from their place in the landscape and the society that had produced them. In the last two decades, there has been an effort towards more sociological approaches, and attempts to view rock art in context, relating it to contemporary sites and examining its position in the wider landscape (Peña and Rey 2001; Bradley *et al.* 1994). The recent discovery of Galician petroglyphs in rock shelters has changed views on the relationship between these manifestations and the surrounding space, and led to reflections on their actual audiences and the role petroglyphs played in the shaping of local identities (Fábregas and Rodríguez 2012a).

The repertoire of the Galician petroglyphs is dominated by geometric images (Table 5.1): circular combinations, cupmarks and series of lines often joining the first two motifs. These are precisely the designs shared with regions like Ireland or Britain and with similar chronologies, as noted below. But there is also a more idiosyncratic group, carved in a semi-naturalistic style, where zoomorphs (nearly always deer) play the main role, joined by less common representations of weapons (mainly daggers and halberds), 'idols', anthropomorphs and occasional scenes of horse-(and, sometimes, deer) riding. The geographical distribution of these two 'groups' is not homogeneous: the geometric section is present in the western half of the Galician and north Portuguese regions (although a growing number of finds have been reported further to the east of Galicia in recent years). As for the animal representations, they cluster around the *rías* (deep sea inlets on the south-western coast of Galicia) and diminish as we move further inland (Fig. 5.1), a pattern shared with other figurative carvings, with the notable exception of the metal weapons that, being comparatively few in number, may also be found significantly inland.

Table 5.1. Main motifs in several catalogues of Galician rock art. García and Peña's sample comes from the whole Pontevedra province while Vázquez lists sites from the four Galician provinces.

<i>García & Peña (1980)*</i>		<i>Vázquez (2006)*</i>	
Cupmarks	89.56%	Circular combinations	78.62%
Circular combinations	75.57%	Cupmarks	62.12%
Zoomorphs	19.84%	Zoomorphs	12.82%
Weapons	3.81%	Weapons	3.37%
Labyrinths	0.76%	Labyrinths	1.98%
*Over 500 rocks		*Over 1006 rocks	
<i>North Barbanza Peninsula*</i>		<i>Deza Region*</i>	
Cupmarks	52.40%	Cupmarks	72.83%
Zoomorphs	37.20%	Circular combinations	41.30%
Circular combinations	36.99%	Weapons	5.43%
Weapons	2.47%	Zoomorphs	—
Labyrinths	0.62%	Labyrinths	—
*164 rocks		*92 rocks	

Drawing up a chronological framework for open-air rock art is a daunting task, particularly in north-west Iberia, where the combined soil and climatic conditions are especially detrimental to the preservation of organic remains. The challenges have led to an approach focusing on three aspects: the existence of certain engraved motifs with known parallels in the archaeological record; comparison with similar examples from other areas; and, lastly, the archaeological information recovered at the foot of the carved panels or in the immediate surroundings.

As for the first source of information, there are two major problems: being in the open, carved rocks were susceptible to being modified and additions could be ongoing, sometimes lasting several millennia; furthermore, those representations of ‘real objects’ (therefore archaeologically datable) are but a tiny minority within the catalogue of petroglyphs. That is precisely the case with the ‘idols’, halberds and daggers, and also with the riding scenes. In short (Fábregas and Rodríguez 2012b), idols can be traced back to 3300 BC, while metal weapons are ascribed to the second half of the third millennium BC. The chronology of horse riding – which is represented in a number of Galician petroglyphs – is controversial (Fábregas *et al.* 2011) but it seems reasonable to assume that it was present in Iberia by the transition between the third and second millennia BC. Equally troublesome is the dating of the more widespread and Atlantic motifs, the circular combinations, whose roots could lie in the regional megalithic art, as shown by

occasional finds. Also ambiguous is the dating of the cup-marks, closely associated with the megaliths, but certainly carved right through to historic periods. Nevertheless, they tend to occur on the same panels with circular combinations and deer. The images of metal weapons are quite often associated with the hard core of the Galician petroglyphs (more than 50% of the time), therefore reinforcing the attribution of at least a significant part of the Galician petroglyphs to the third millennium BC. At any rate, correlation analyses are moderately reliable only in those areas, such as the Barbanza peninsula (A Coruña), where a systematic inventory and recording has been carried out.

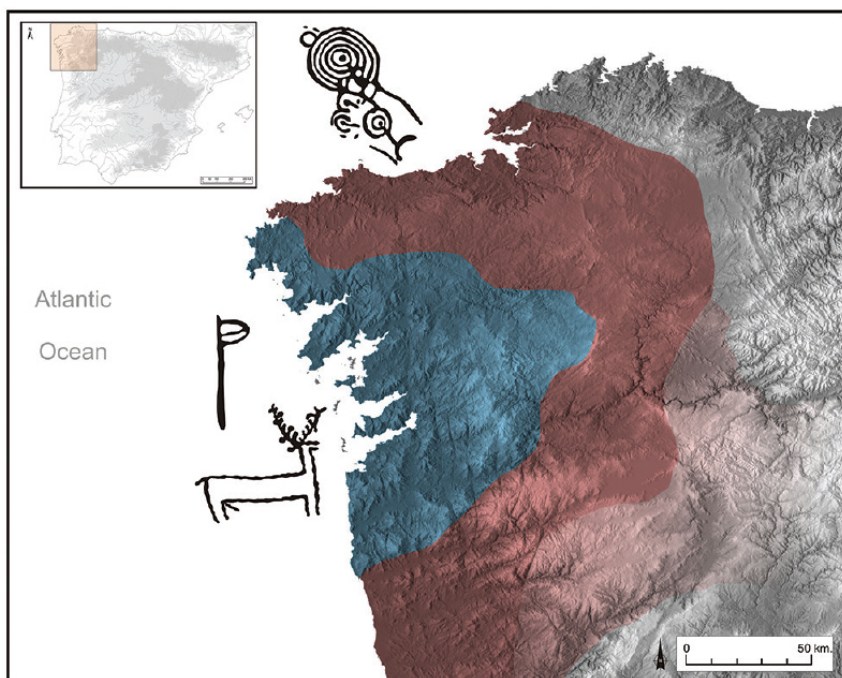


Fig. 5.1. Distribution of figurative (blue) and geometric (red) art.

Most attempts at a chronological contextualisation of the petroglyphs through archaeological excavation achieved only limited success, probably due to the shallow depth of the soils in the vicinity of most petroglyphs and the aggressive post-depositional processes that have taken place. Often nothing more than a few hammerstones and small quantities of Chalcolithic sherds were recovered, and stone-settings with artefacts were only reported in two cases, with structures or radiocarbon datings corresponding to 4000–3700 BC and the third millennium respectively (Table 5.2). After the excavation at Os Carballos (Pontevedra), the engravings were dated as late as the first millennium BC (Santos and Seoane 2010), an interpretation based – in our opinion (Fábregas and Rodríguez 2012c) – on flimsy evidence that otherwise ignored dates and features that could support an elaboration of the 2140–1880 BC timespan.

Table 5.2. Archaeological evidence found in close contact to Galician petroglyphs. Those references marked (*) correspond to material scatters within a 200 m radius of the decorated rock.

<i>Rock-art site</i>	<i>Motifs engraved</i>	<i>Material sets</i>	<i>Structures</i>	<i>C¹⁴ Dates (cal BC)</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Gurita I	Deer, sun	Hammer-stones	—	—	(Rodríguez 2009)
Foxa da Vella	Halberds, daggers, circular combinations, animals, etc.	Hammer-stones	—	—	(César 2009)
Os Mouchos	Deer, horses, humans, circular combinations, etc.	Hammer-stones	—	—	(Bonilla 2009)
As Campurras	Cupmarks	Quartz & quartzite industries, Neolithic sherds	Low bank, hut foundations, stone paving, stela, post-holes	4075–3750 3950–3500 4070–3790	(Villar 2008)
O Betote	Cupmarks	Quartz & flint industries, Chalcolithic & Early Bronze Age sherds	Stone circle, ditches, fire structures	—	(Cano 2008)
Os Carballos	Deer, circular combinations	Quartz industries, undiagnostic sherds	Post-holes, small ditch, possible stone paving	2140–1880 1740–1520 800–540 760–410 540–360 510–380	(Santos, 2010; Kaal <i>et al.</i> 2011)
O Viveiro	Querns	Quartz industries, hammer-stones, <i>mano</i> & modern pottery	—	—	(Mañana and Seoane 2008)
Devesa do Rei	Reticulated motif, cup-marks	Quartz industries, hammer-stones & modern pottery	Possible stone paving	—	(Mañana and Seoane 2008)
Pedra das Proceções	Halberds, daggers, scutiforms	Quartz & quartzite lithic industries	—	—	(Vázquez, 2005)
A Ferradura	Podomorphs, horseshoes, circles	Bell-beaker sherds	—	—	(Seoane-Veiga <i>et al.</i> 2011)
A Cabeciña	Circular combinations	Quartz & quartzite industries, Hammer-stones, etc.	—	—	(F. Carrera, pers. comm.)
A Pedreira	Cupmarks and lines	Ground-stone axe preform	—	—	(J. Costas pers. comm.)
Os Sagueiros*	Cupmarks	Early Bronze Age pottery sherds, including Bell-beaker	—	—	(Fábregas <i>et al.</i> 2003)
Monte de San Miguel*	Cupmarks	Early Bronze Age pottery sherds	—	—	(Fábregas <i>et al.</i> 2003)
Poza da Lagoa*	Halberds, daggers, circular combinations,	Quartz lithic industries, Early Bronze Age sherds	—	2140–1950	(Fábregas 2010)
Coto da Fenteira*	Circular combinations, cupmarks	Chalcolithic & Bronze Age sherds, quartz lithic industries	—	2885–2620 2700–2295 1970–1615 1835–1425	(Fábregas 2010)

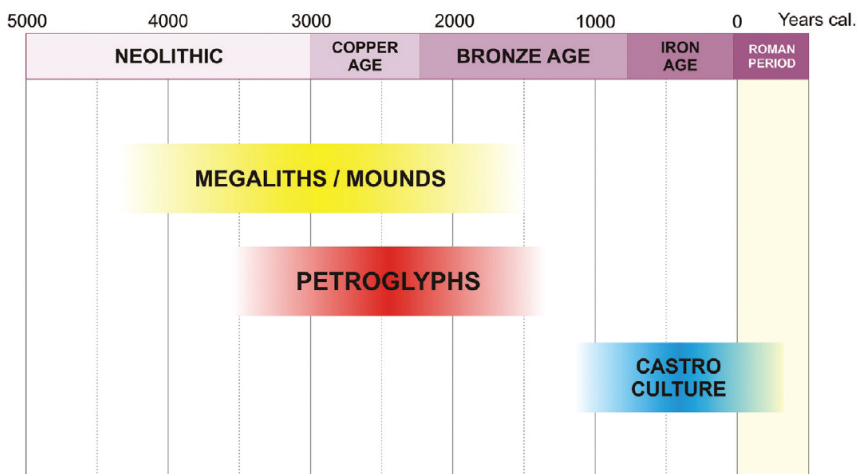


Fig. 5.2. Chronological framework for Galician rock art.

Assessing the cultural link between the carved rocks and the material scatters nearby must be done with caution, for contemporaneity does not necessarily follow from spatial coexistence. Nevertheless, the available evidence in a 200 m radius from the carved sites (diagnostic sherds or radiocarbon dates) points again to a period roughly spanning from 2700 to 1600 BC. Interestingly, this temporal range fits in with that suggested by work done in Britain, where cup-and-ring marked stones are dated to the late third/early second millennium BC in Clava (Scotland) (Bradley 2000), very much like those found on the cist slab from Witton Gilbert (England) (Beckensall 2012). Earlier dates – in the first half of the third millennium BC – for these geometric images are postulated at the Boyne valley megaliths (Bradley 2007; Sheridan 2012), consistent with those obtained from decorated outcrops at Torbhlaire (Scotland) and Backstone Beck (England).

Thus, the main carving episodes in Galicia would have taken place from 3000 to 1600 BC (Fig. 5.2). Still, this is also a long standing phenomenon, with motifs that arguably have Neolithic roots going back to the 4000 BC and, likewise, there are indications that, long after their inception, some carved surfaces retained a degree of significance up to the Late Bronze Age or the Iron Age, and even historical times.

Rock art and other archaeological phenomena

Considering the possible Final Neolithic to Bronze Age chronology of most Galician petroglyphs, it is interesting to explore the relationship with other contemporary, in theory, archaeological sites such as mounds and domestic places. Petroglyphs generally cluster in positions mid-way down slopes, at intermediate altitudes (62% between 100–300 m in northern Barbanza, for instance), but there is still some uncertainty about which areas of the landscape were preferred for settlement during Galician late prehistory: most researchers favour the coastal plain and mid-slope valleys while the peaks and elevations – the ‘megalithic space’ – would have been less densely occupied (Fábregas 2010; Peña and Rey 2001).

One may wonder whether the areas with petroglyphs had a sacred character that excluded domestic activities, but in our view a ‘restrictive’ concept of ritual would not be enforced at the time: the latter having a polymorphic nature, materialising in many different ways, ranging from those ceremonies of local, informal and ephemeral character to others highly organised and encoded that may be simultaneously sacred and secular (Insoll 2004). New archaeological evidence shows the capillarity between both spheres during recent prehistory in north-west Spain: presence of ‘megalithic idols’ in domestic contexts (Bonilla *et al.* 2006), patterns of division of the living space conceptually similar to those reported in the megalithic mounds (Gianotti *et al.* 2011) or the seeming coexistence of apparently ritual and domestic spaces within a site (Bradley *et al.* 2005). The ever-growing number of material scatters (mostly corresponding to 3000–1600 BC) near the decorated outcrops reinforce our scepticism about a rigid separation of everyday and ‘special’ spheres.

Petroglyphs and mounds tend to occupy different parts of the landscape (Fábregas 2010) since the latter are mostly situated on the top of the high areas or sierras. Nevertheless, this spatial dichotomy becomes ambiguous in a fine-tuned analysis since both phenomena show a more or less significant presence beyond their respective hard-core distribution. During the later phases of the Galician megalithic phenomenon (third millennium BC), mounds tend to grow smaller and to occupy lower areas, like the mid-slopes or even the valleys (Fábregas and Vilaseco 2011), the sectors of the landscape where petroglyphs form denser clusters.



Fig. 5.3. Spatial relationship between the petroglyph and the mound of Cacharelas (Porto do Son, A Coruña): the first is located on the limit of the visibility of the latter.

The relationship between mounds and certain rock art motifs, such as cupmarks, has been repeatedly pointed out (Villoch 1995), showing how, in many cases, the latter are near the limits of their visibility (Fig. 5.3), playing a kind of liminal role for the megaliths. In some cases, cupmarks are engraved on the stones forming the chamber or the external cuirass. This connection can be also extended, though in a less clear-cut way, to other geometrical motifs such as circles and circular combinations, which sometimes occur near the mounds, and even form part of them.

There are also some tantalising coincidences in the way the decorated panels are organised, or in specific scenes. For example, on the rocks of Pozo Ventura (Poio, Pontevedra) or Coto da Braña 3 (Cotobade, Pontevedra) there is a distribution of circular combinations and U-box images that recall strikingly those on the slabs of Breton or Irish megaliths, including a definite *horror vacui*. But these similarities can also be traced in the case of complex scenes: a good example might be the hunting episodes displayed on the petroglyph of Pedra Xestosa (Laxe, A Coruña) (Rodríguez *et al.* 2010) and on the paintings of the dolmen of Orca dos Juncas (Viseu, Portugal) (Fig. 5.4). Both seem to represent scenes of a collaborative deer hunt by humans and dogs, but there is a figure – more difficult to perceive in Pedra Xestosa due to the weathering – interpreted as some kind of protective deity, also found in other petroglyphs displaying this type of scene (Santos 2005).

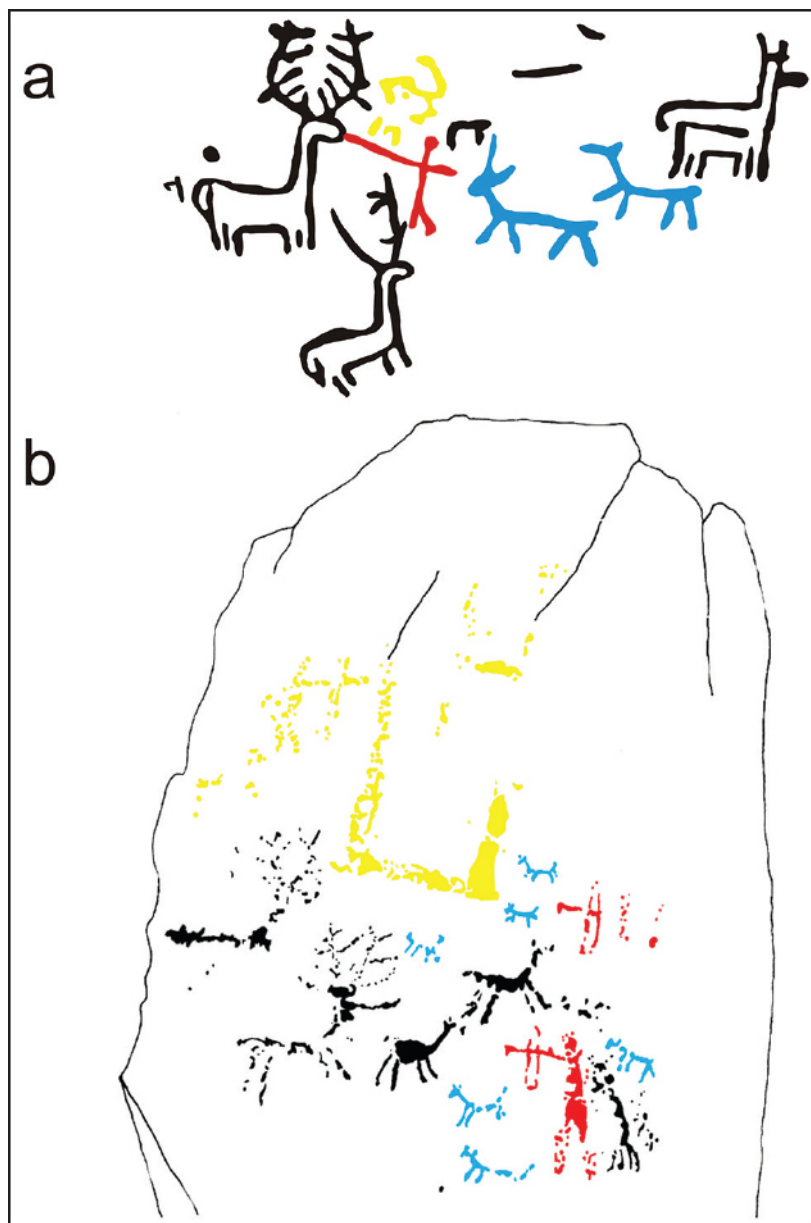


Fig. 5.4. Deer hunting scenes of Pedra Xestosa petroglyph (Laxe, A Coruña) [a] and Orca dos Juncas passage-grave (Viseu, Portugal) [b]. Both display armed human figures (red), dogs (blue) and a possible representation of an idol or protective divinity (yellow).

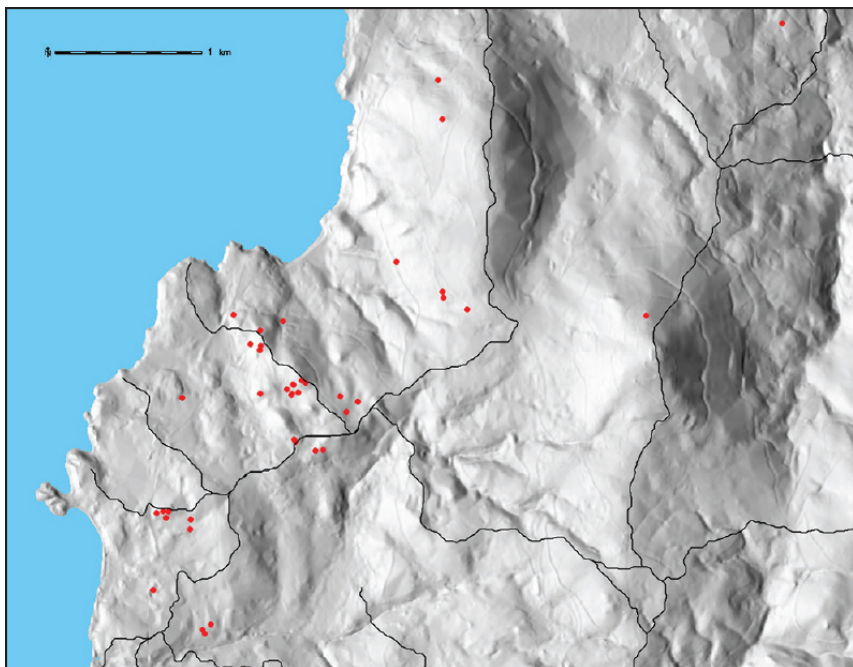


Fig. 5.5. Main least-cost paths and location of petroglyphs in the northern sector of Porto do Son. The dissociation between a number of rock art sites and paths can be observed.

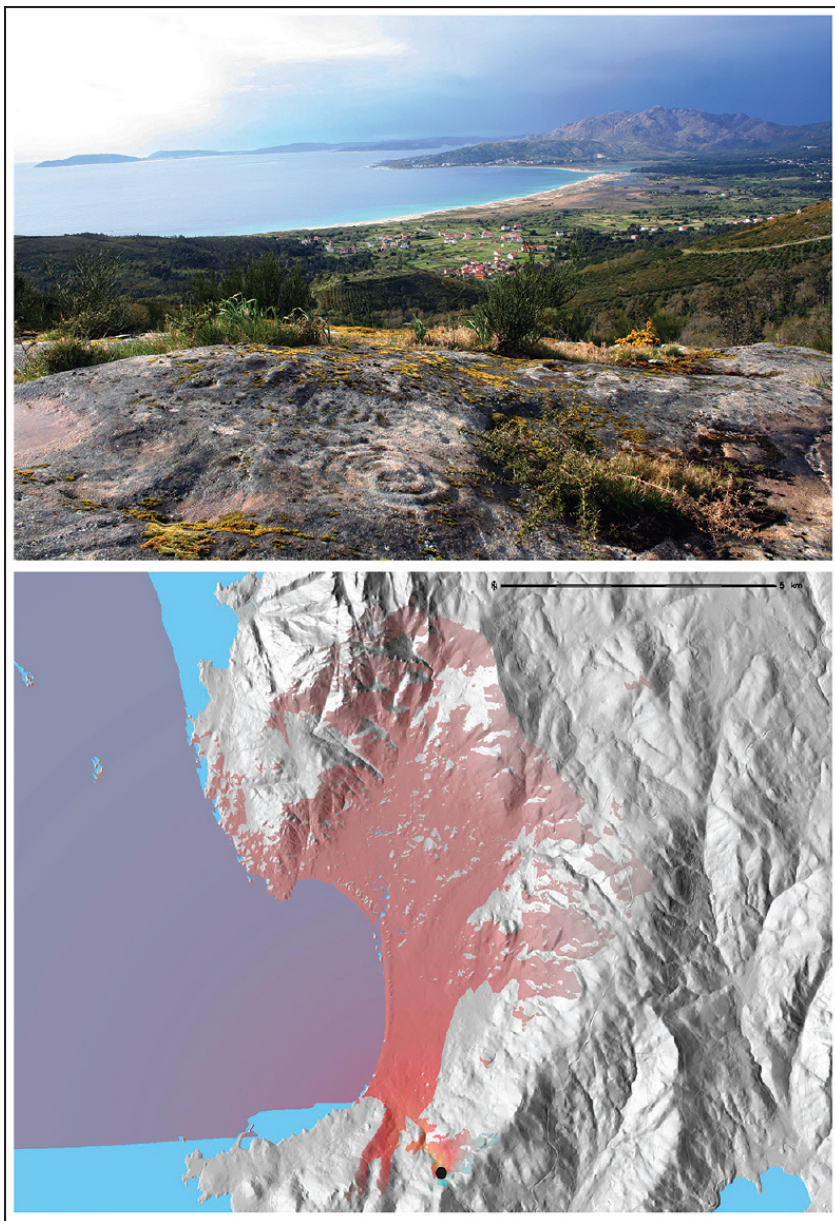


Fig. 5.6. Visibility from As Laxiñas petroglyph (Carnota, A Coruña) and theoretical viewshed obtained with GRASS GIS using a 5 m resolution LIDAR map.

An obvious explanation could be that the open-air and the megalithic examples are coeval and shared a common set of beliefs. Or, perhaps, those few cases in the open being but a relic of an ideological background, rooted in the local Neolithic

that in later times still retained part of its original allure, much in the same way as postulated for the decorations in some EBA cists (Penedo and Fábregas 1997). Other writers (Bueno *et al.* 2010) have observed the great transversality of particular themes or images in the Iberian post-palaeolithic art, without necessarily keeping the original set of meanings attached to them.

Landscape, perceptibility and audiences

Being in the open, Galician rock art has often been considered as a phenomenon whose contemplation would be little restricted, acting as some kind of ‘intergroup’ communication mechanism – a sort of code of signals or messages – designed to mediate in the use of the landscape, establishing preferential or exclusive access to specific spaces with an economic and/or symbolic significance. Petroglyphs would be linked to the ‘geography of movement’, their location analysed in terms of proximity to key transit points, such as cols or mountain ridges, and also to small basins providing shelter, water and pasture over the year (Bradley 1997). This proposal needs qualification: research in the north of the Barbanza Peninsula showed that only 47% of the 164 rock art sites are located near major pathways (Fig. 5.5) or resource-rich areas and, even then, the visual relationship is not always obvious, for in many cases petroglyphs are barely perceptible from the latter.

The interaction between Galician petroglyphs and the landscape is basically mediated through two parameters: visibility and perceptibility. The first, referring to the amount of space seen from a specific petroglyph, depends almost exclusively on the place where this is located. Visibility can be restricted to a close area surrounding the petroglyph or, otherwise, extended to medium or even long distances (Fig. 5.6). This divergence could point to a different role of the petroglyphs: the first disposition implies a close-range ‘control’ of the space; in the latter it is exerted from afar, so the interaction would be less obvious and, maybe, more symbolic.

As to perceptibility, the analyses usually focused on rock size and inclination, identifying the petroglyphs displayed on vertical surfaces as the more perceptible (Peña and Rey 2001) (Fig. 5.7). Most carvings are done on horizontal exposures (57% of the cases against 7% on vertical in northern Barbanza, for example) and thus would be less conspicuous. Yet other characteristics must be considered: leaving aside the as yet unproven possibility of the carvings also being painted, there are other ways to fine-tune the perceptibility of the engravings, for instance, taking advantage of the sharp contrast in colour between freshly made grooves (lighter) and the untouched granite (usually dark grey). Periodic refreshing of the engravings would keep that contrast for some time. On the contrary, the selection of light-toned granite rocks would make the contemplation of the carvings more difficult, since perception is highly dependent on the sunlight at certain times of the day (or the year, sometimes). In some petroglyphs the varying position of the sun would result in different ‘readings’ of the panels, probably changing the messages conveyed, too. Other conditions may have an influence as well: the rain sometimes slightly changes the colour and brightness of the granitic outcrops, and also, when a wet surface catches the light, the carved images may appear raised (Fig. 5.8).



Fig. 5.7. Deer engraved on a vertical surface in Outeiro Campelos (Porto do Son, A Coruña).

With few exceptions (Bradley 2009), the analysis of audience in the Galician petroglyphs was limited to the perceptibility of the panel or to the eventual existence of enough room for people to gather beside it. This would be the case of the so-called ‘Panoply Rocks’, particularly huge petroglyphs displaying several types of weapons (daggers, halberds, so-called shields) often linked to aggregation rituals (Vázquez 2000). Otherwise, the fact that rock art is located mainly outdoors led to the assumption that petroglyphs were easily perceived and virtually accessible to anyone going about the prehistoric landscape.

The discovery of petroglyphs within rock shelters may challenge that view: some contain typical motifs of the Galician open air rock art, such as circles or animals (Fábregas and Rodríguez 2012a) (Fig. 5.9). Obviously, this kind of sites would impose restrictions on the number of observers, but it is just possible that the rest saw their access regulated too, as discussed below. Some decorated rocks were meant to be conspicuous and others intended to go unnoticed, hidden except for a few eyes. Even the sites close to pathways or areas of economic importance might have been virtually invisible to people unaware of their existence: probably those who were not part of the community (or communities) responsible for their engraving.



Fig. 5.8. Geometric figures at As Laxiñas (Carnota, A Coruña); there is also a dagger clearly perceptible only at a specific time or, otherwise, by watering the surface of the rock.

On the other hand, it is also commonly accepted that the understanding of meanings of rock art would have largely depended on the domain of culturally-mediated processes. Therefore, symbolic or mental restrictions for the viewing of rock art might have been almost as effective as physical constraints. Not only would it be important for the command of the symbols and scenes displayed, but also the control of the *'mise-en-scene'*: a set of physical, mental and emotional activities including the approach to the rock, standing by it or the sequence in which the motifs and scenes should be viewed (Tilley 2008), and even knowing the proper conditions for doing so vis-à-vis weather and illumination.

The local individuals unfamiliar with the procedures would be, in that respect, much as outsiders. Thus, 'being in on the secret' might be a requisite to full membership in the group and the expertise or right to transfer it a possible source of power or prestige. Furthermore, this knowledge could have been updated over a lifetime, so an individual's perception of a petroglyph could have changed over time. So, the significance of a petroglyph might have varied according to its audiences, depending not only on whether they belonged to the community responsible for its engraving but also on the status of the observers within the group or even on the different stages through which a specific individual passed and also the concrete circumstances at the time of the observation. This is why we would rather talk of audiences instead of audience.

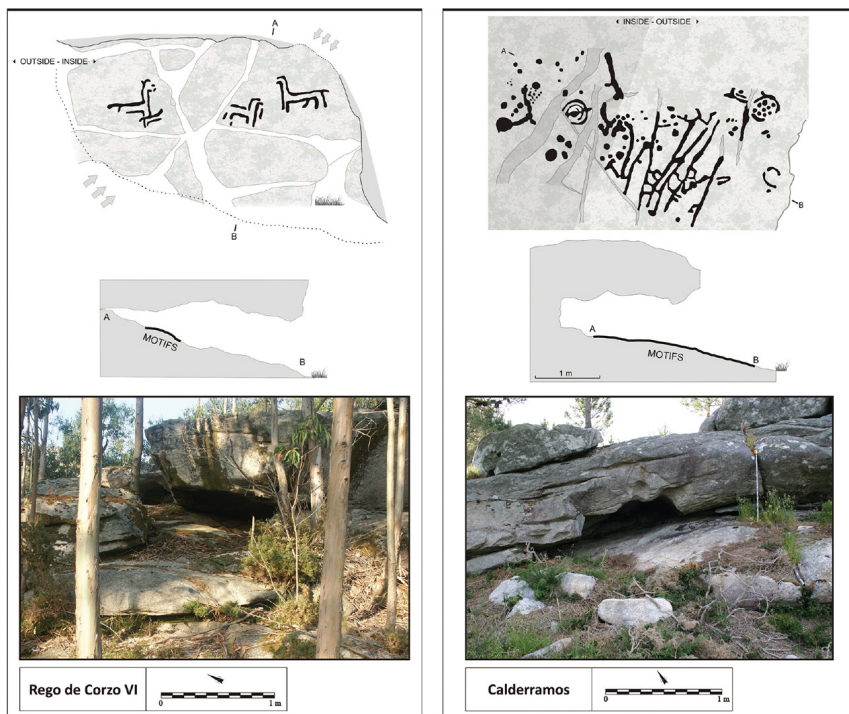


Fig. 5.9. Petroglyphs inside rock shelters.

Not all of the petroglyphs allow for the same level of freedom in the observers: while a horizontal engraving could be viewed and visualised in different ways and maybe invited a more active participation, requiring the audiences to move around or find the right place to see the images, the vertical petroglyphs usually have a clear and favoured way of observing them. The latter often display motifs and scenes reputedly 'easier to understand' (weapons, hunting scenes, etc.), suggesting that these panels were intended for a broader audience with a more passive role.

Interaction between a community and the petroglyphs should not be viewed only as the activities taking place around the carvings, but as a sum of events that could have begun with walking to them. Territories can often be understood as a set of specific places with a special significance for the community, rather than an abstract space with clear boundaries, and the visit to the carvings could be seen as a symbolic act in itself, helping to structure the experiences of the places where they are located, binding and ordering them in a specific way, possibly typified by the past members of the group (Tilley 1994). In recent times such an interaction is recorded in northern Portugal where outcrops, sometimes displaying engravings, were regularly visited during community rituals in which the name and stories related with each place were transmitted to the young people as a way to introduce them to the knowledge about the territory (Afonso 1993).

The accumulation of different types and styles of engravings on certain rocks might relate to the tendency of human groups to settle the same places recurrently,

even across millennia. It is observed in both funerary and domestic spheres during Galician prehistory (Fábregas and Vilaseco 2011; Bonilla *et al.* 2006) and can last into the Iron Age, since several hill-forts share the space with petroglyphs, a practice sometimes interpreted as the reclaiming of old ritual places (González-Ruibal 2006). However, we could see these episodes more as a resignification – probably with a different conception from the original – of specific monuments than as an argument for the general persistence of the symbolic importance of petroglyphs, since, for example, the relationship between hill-forts and rock art is far from being univocal, including indifference or even destruction.

From parades to visions

Galician petroglyphs are presumably a polysemous phenomenon not just because of their fairly wide chronology and iconographic variety but by the changing character of their audiences, too. Otherwise, the material evidence recovered by the decorated rocks is not conclusive in terms of the actions eventually related to their execution or ‘use’. Also we must bear in mind that most interpretations on the role of the carvings rely on the figurative motifs, a spectacular but minority section of the corpus. A good example of this would be the aforementioned ‘Panoply Rocks’, arguably considered foci for gatherings of warriors (Vázquez 2000), although no hard proof has resulted from excavations in the vicinity.

Some authors (Vázquez 2000; Tilley 2008) have suggested that the engraving of metal weapons would indicate an obsession with metal as a prestige good and the wish to obtain it. But the daggers and halberds do not require a higher consumption of metal than axes or much more technical expertise (Rovira 2004), and yet they are hegemonic on the petroglyphs, unlike flat axes or Palmela points, which are absent from the panels in spite of being more common in the archaeological record. Moreover, the small quantity and sparse distribution of Galician ores, together with a limited and reputedly domestic production, does not support control of the metal production by specific communities or social groups (Comendador 1997). A further hint that the representations of weapons would have little to do with their presumed value as metal is given by their frequent association with images of objects traditionally interpreted as shields (but also as masks or even chariots), probably made of perishable materials (Fig. 5.10) and, therefore, possibly with little economic value.

The engraving of metallic objects as a possible metaphor of their ritual deposition (Bradley 1998) might be suggested by the occasional find of metal objects at the outcrops, the spatial proximity between metal hoards and petroglyphs displaying weapons (Fábregas *et al.* 2009), or even by the way these artefacts are set on some panels, such as O Ramallal (Campo Lameiro, Pontevedra) (Fig. 5.10). Actually, the acts of laying or engraving metal weapons might be conceptually akin: in the first case returning the metal to nature, where it belongs (Alves and Comendador 2009) or, alternatively, to the world of spirits by drawing them on the rock.

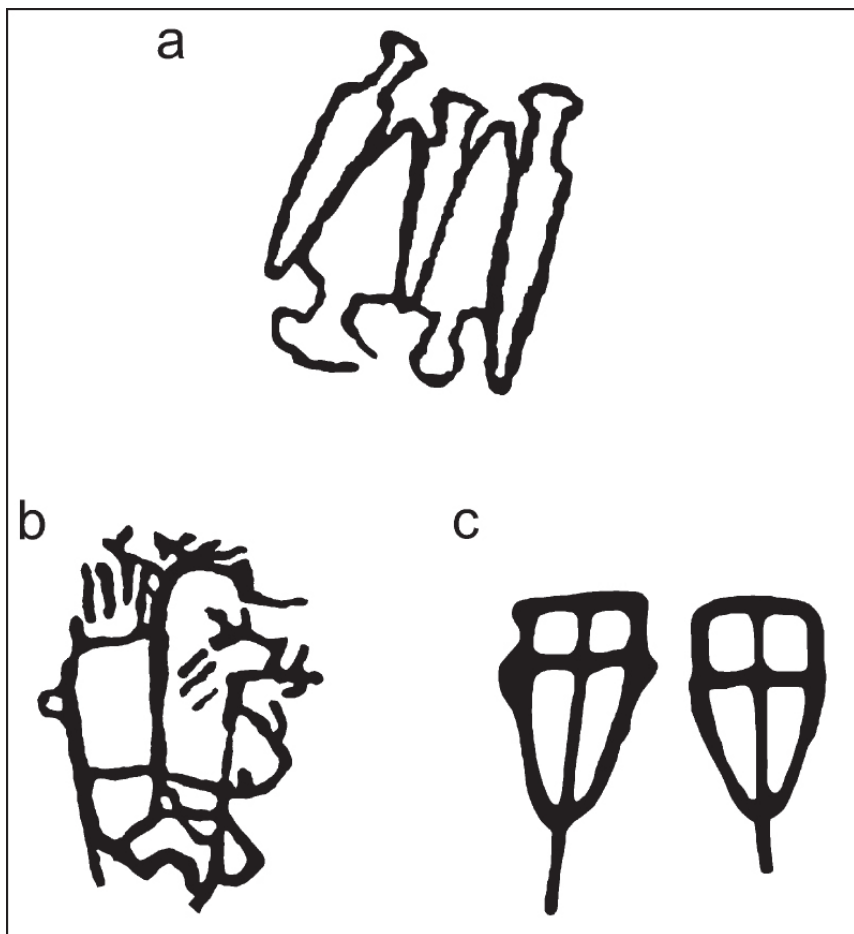


Fig. 5.10. a) Daggers in O Ramallal (Campo Lameiro, Pontevedra), represented in a way that suggests their deposition in a hoard. Images of possible shields made of perishable materials in the petroglyphs of b) Coto Cornellal P20 (Agolada, Pontevedra) and c) Auga da Laxe (Gondomar, Pontevedra).

Still, there are obvious differences between metal hoards and petroglyphs displaying weapons: while accepting that both elements could underline the symbolic importance of particular places, such as outcrops, it seems that the first – unlike some of the latter – were apparently intended to go unnoticed (Vilaça 2006). Moreover, 70% of hoarded objects or isolated finds in Galicia and northern Portugal are flat axes (Comendador 1997), conspicuously absent from the petroglyphs. That dominance could point to their economic and symbolic value: they demand larger quantities of metal but also are among the few artefacts that were ‘translated’ from stone into metal and, possibly, inherited earlier social practices as well. Here, it is worth mentioning the recent find of a ground axe rough-out during the excavation at the petroglyph of A Pedreira (J. Costas pers.

comm.) or the high number of casual findings of stone axes, not easily explained by simple losses. Furthermore, the possibility of axes acting as surrogates of the human body, and therefore buried in the ground, as suggested for the Scottish Early Bronze Age (Jones 2001), should not be ruled out.

Finally, a simple explanation for the presence of specific metal objects on the Galician petroglyphs is that they represented the social importance of the male and the symbolic connotations of conflict and violence. Nevertheless, this hypothesis does not explain the absence of the most common metal weapons in the archaeological record, the Palmela points; it also assumes that flat axes were not used in combat, a circumstance far from demonstrated. The daggers, halberds and shields on petroglyphs stress the role of close combat; the presence of stone mace-heads and bipennes among the grave goods in some third millennium Galician mounds could be read in the same way. The experimental use of bronze halberds and daggers point to the special skills required (O'Flaherty 2007; Kristiansen 2002), favouring the emergence of a specialised, socially-prestigious body of warriors for whom these weapons would be symbols of power. Halberds in particular are more effective in single fights, perhaps highly ritualised and codified contests between champions with few casualties. That would not prevent occasional large-scale and bloodier clashes, where the number of victims could be high (Jantzen *et al.* 2011).

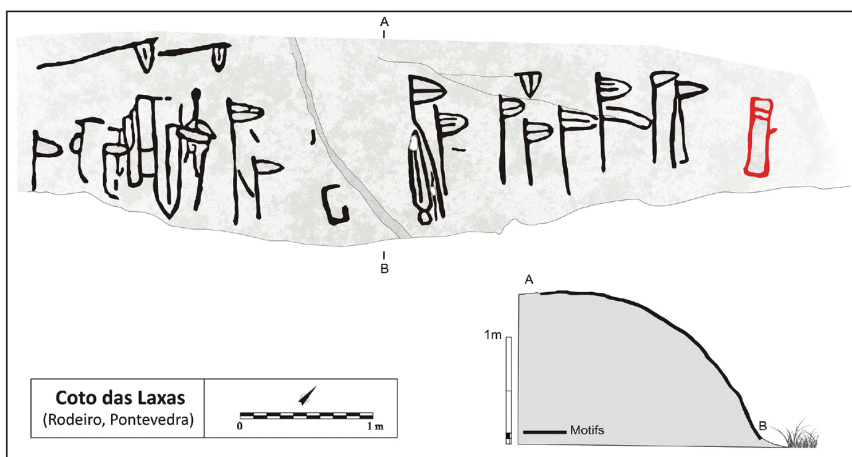


Fig. 5.11. Halberds, dagger and idol (red) in the Coto das Laxas petroglyph.

The emphasis on close-range weaponry in Galician rock art could be read as praise to hand-to-hand combat and much the same could be said about the hunting of deer with spears, at the expense of 'safer' methods involving the use of arrows. Nevertheless, in the second case, a more prosaic explanation could be the greater effectiveness of spears when employed against large game, as ethnographic data seem to suggest (Rodríguez *et al.* 2010).

Almost no human figure is associated with depictions of weapons (just one case, possibly a later addition), perhaps an exercise of metonymy: the warrior was implicit in the image of his weapon, as could be the case, too, in certain hunting

scenes where only the spears are shown (Rodríguez *et al.* 2010). We might talk about synecdoche since, as J. Rodríguez (2012) suggests for warrior statues of the Galician Iron Age, weapons probably were not mere objects but part of the warrior's body; thus, their loss could mean forfeiting this social condition. Elements such as arrowheads, more 'impersonal' and subject to accidental loss, failed to convey the message as strongly as daggers and halberds, despite bows actually playing an important role in armed conflict, as archaeological and ethnographic data indicate (Petrequin and Petrequin 1990).

The occasional association of weapons and idols (Fig. 5.11) could emphasise the protective role of the first, both to warriors and community, considering that the latter are usually represented on petroglyphs as mediators in situations of danger and anxiety for the group and its members, such as hunting scenes (Santos 2005; Rodríguez *et al.* 2010), or located in spaces of 'liminality' such as at the entrance of burial mounds. Thus, it would make more sense to reproduce weapons with a balanced offensive-defensive nature than others with a more clearly aggressive role, such as arrowheads. The primacy of the armed individuals would not lie in their coercive capacity but, rather, on their role in the defence of the community, or that would at least be the intended message.

Peña and Rey (2001) have remarked upon the biased worldview represented in Galician petroglyphs, dominated in its naturalistic section by male-oriented themes such as hunting or war, together with the frequent occurrence of stags with exaggerated antlers; meanwhile, everyday activities, traditionally attributed to women, are apparently absent. This observation is not inconsistent with other archaeological data but, leaving aside the pitfalls of such a straightforward reading of those images, we cannot exclude the possibility that the vast majority of geometric images might have a whole range of significations not so gender-biased, and this 'automatic assignment' to masculinity should be viewed with caution, as some authors have argued for in other areas of the Iberian Peninsula (Díaz-Andreu 1998).

We commented above how, in many cases, petroglyphs must have been an ideological resource meant basically for each community's consumption: only its members (or just some of them) would be in on the secret as to what the messages conveyed or the stories associated with the panels and, no less important, could locate the carved rocks. That self-imposed restriction is particularly neat in the case of the petroglyphs within rock shelters, hardly large enough to hold more than a few individuals at a time. Eventually, the sensorial deprivation, combined with the use of drugs, could lead to states of trance, perhaps linked to the execution of certain motifs such as series of lines, cupmarks or circular combinations.

The 'neuropsychological model', originally focused on foragers' art (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988), has been also applied to late prehistoric images in western Europe (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1993; Bradley 1997; 2009; Wallis 2009). The common occurrence of geometric motifs was linked to hallucinations – 'phosphenes' or 'entoptic images' – experienced by the so-called 'shamans' during trances induced by drugs or other mechanisms. These hallucinations are accompanied by a range of sensations, from floating to tunnel vision (Dronfield 1996), that might be perceived as a 'dreamtime' or a 'temporary death', giving access to the world of spirits (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988; Chippindale *et al.*

2000).

There are elements suggesting that 'Altered States of Consciousness' (ASC) might be at play in Galician rock art. The rising number of decorated rock shelters (Fábregas and Rodríguez 2012a) whose limited room and lack of domestic use could hint at the notion of cavities as places of special symbolism, maybe a gate to the spirit realm (Lewis-Williams 2012). The identification of hyoscyamine in a quern carved on the stone floor of one of these rock shelters (Pena Cavada, Pontevedra) (Fábregas 2010) could support the link between the execution of certain carvings and ASC, this time induced by the intake of drugs. Hyoscyamine is a potent alkaloid, present in plants of the *Solanaceae* family, such as *Datura stramonium*, mandrake or belladonna, causing hallucinations, euphoria, amnesia or even coma and death (Stella *et al.* 2010). It is worth noting that at this site, a number of cupmarks (one of the typical entoptic images) were found and, also, the roof of the cavity was full of deep hollows created by natural erosion.



Fig. 5.12. 'Plastic' or 'fluid' appearance of circular combinations carved on the petroglyphs of Ozão (Valença do Minho, Portugal) and Monte Tetón (Tomiño, Pontevedra) (photographs: J. L. Galovart and J. Costas).

Associated with ASC is often the perception of the rock surface as 'fluid', a flexible membrane separating different planes of reality (Lewis-Williams and

Dowson 1990). Both artificial and natural features – engravings of circles and spirals but also cracks and fissures – would act as gates into other worlds (Dronfield 1996; Jones 2007; Wallis 2009). This view could be present in some petroglyphs where circular combinations show a plastic quality, adapting themselves to the bulges of the stone (Fig. 5.12), eventually going over the edge of the panel as though melting down (Bradley and Fábregas 1998). The notion of ‘passing through’ may be assessed in A Cabeceña (Oia, Pontevedra): here several circular combinations are found, some starting from a crack while another surges beneath a vertical block with a natural hole (Fig. 5.13), thus opening up the possibility of a ritual performance where going through that orifice would be a metaphor for getting into the rock itself.



Fig. 5.13. A Cabeziña (Oia, Pontevedra), a petroglyph displaying several circular combinations, one surging beneath a large block with a natural hole. Several examples of the relationship between circles and rock fissures can be seen in this site.

The aforementioned views might be consistent with the 26 findings of metal objects inside fissures of outcrops – some of them displaying carvings – recorded in north-west Iberia (Alves and Comendador 2009). Somehow, traditional legends

among Galician peasantry share these conceptions: numerous references not just to mounds and hill-forts, but also ‘hollow rocks’ (usually tafoni) as lairs for ‘mouros’ and other mythological creatures, often keeping treasures. These beliefs are behind the destruction of several petroglyphs, as happened in Auga dos Cebros (Oia, Pontevedra) or, possibly, in Rego de Corzo (Porto do Son, A Coruña) (Fig. 5.14).

A wide range of meanings has been proposed for geometric motifs, from solar representations to traps or water (Peña and Rey 2001). The spatial relationship between petroglyphs and watercourses has been repeatedly noted and we feel that this link could also be conceptual: some carvings occur beside natural basins (Fábregas and Rodríguez 2012a) that, full of rainwater, would contribute to the realism of the scene, giving it movement and even sonority (Fig. 5.15). Other times water or other liquids could have been used to ‘interact’ with the rock during rituals, ‘activating’ or making more perceptible specific motifs and changing the message transmitted to the audience (Fig. 5.8), as has been suggested for some megaliths and petroglyphs of the British Isles (Fowler and Cummings 2003; Wallis 2009).



Fig. 5.14. Ship of Auga dos Cebros (Oia, Pontevedra), blown up with dynamite in the early twentieth century to find the treasure that would be hidden inside the rock. One of the circular combinations of Rego de Corzo (Porto do Son, A Coruña), heavily hammered, probably with a similar goal.

The interpretation of the circular combinations as representing water might have to do with ASC too: a number of references describe the floating sensation

experienced during the trance as swimming or being submerged in water (Chippindale *et al.* 2000). Carving circles might evoke a ‘liquefaction’ of the rock surface as a way to plunge into the world of spirits. Laying down metal objects in cracks of the rocks (some displaying precisely circular combinations) would be conceptually related with their deposition in rivers, a common practice in the Late Bronze Age but, according to the spatial link between EBA metal finds and water courses, traceable to earlier periods (Alves and Comendador 2009). Thus, it is possible that in some cases circular combinations acted as a symbolic equivalent to the water while in other cases were a simple representation of water.

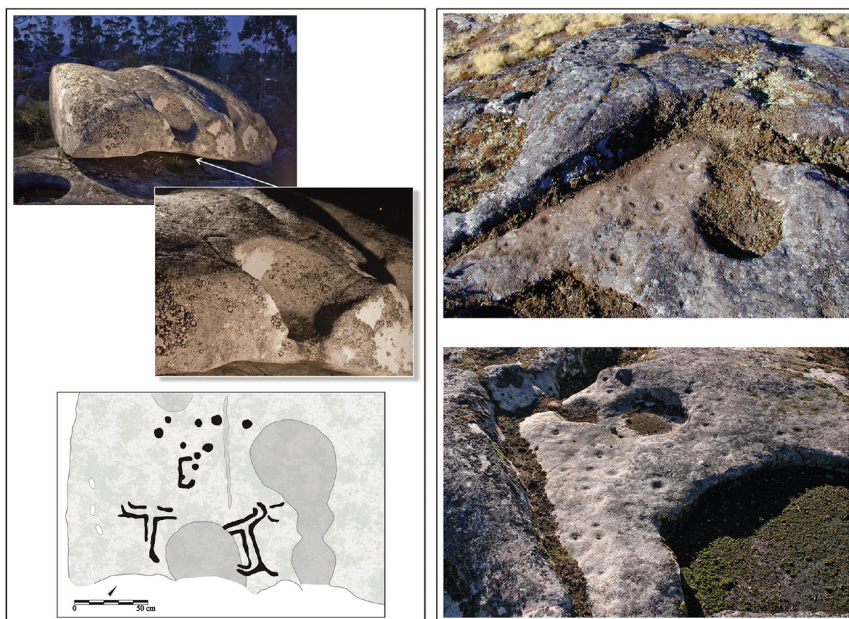


Fig. 5.15. Petroglyphs of Insuela (Porto do Son, A Coruña) and Coto Cornellal P11 (Agolada, Pontevedra). A relationship between engravings (zoomorphs, circles and cup-marks) and basins is apparent on both sites. These natural features would give a peculiar outlook (and maybe meaning) to the rock when filled with rainwater.

Much as it is tempting to relate certain features of the Galician petroglyphs to the ‘neuropsychological model’, we must be cautious both on theoretical (Cruz 2011) and practical grounds. Geometric rock art certainly exists among populations who do not practise ‘shamanism’ (Dronfield 1996) and many experiences traditionally attributed to the ASC are, actually, difficult to attain by using the majority of drugs (Hodgson 2006). ‘Shamanism’ is very difficult to ascertain archaeologically and our study area is no exception; also, psychotropic substances are seldom found or their relationship with the carvings is not incontestable. Finally, we lack hard evidence of the existence of ritual specialists during Galician late prehistory, beyond some instances, such as the inclusion of big quartz crystals among the grave goods that could arguably signal ‘shamanistic’ practices (VanPool 2009).

Moving about

As one of the three ‘finisterres’ in south-west Europe, the Galician territory has been considered a significant stage in the sea routes connecting different regions of the western Atlantic coast, such as Brittany, Ireland and Britain. For decades now, a host of authors spoke of mutual influxes or contacts between those regions in late prehistory, based on formal analogies in the material culture, be that megalithic art, open-air petroglyphs or metal items (MacWhite 1951; Cassen and Vaquero 2003; Schuhmaher 2002). Recent research has brought about new evidence: the distribution analysis of Alpine axes (Fábregas *et al.* 2012) showed the presence of these artefacts both in Brittany, the British Isles and northern Iberia since, at least, 4000 BC; Neolithic exchanges are also indicated by the documentation of variscite beads from Palazuelos de las Cuevas (Zamora, Spain) in two Breton mounds (Querré *et al.* 2008). Research into the cockle-decorated Bell Beakers again points to the existence of a sphere of interaction in the area throughout the third millennium BC (Prieto-Martínez and Salanova 2009), a notion consistent with the reputedly Iberian origin of copper artefacts recovered, together with Bell Beakers, from the burial of the Amesbury Archer (Fitzpatrick 2004).

As to the open-air rock art of Galicia and the British Isles, we have noticed (Fábregas and Bradley 1999) that, in spite of the striking difference represented by the presence of zoomorphs in the Galician art, there are remarkable coincidences about the geometric group and its internal organisation in the panels. All agree on the usual rejection of the more conspicuous outcrops and the generic link with the patterns of occupation and exploitation of territory, but in Galicia the most elevated areas, where mounds are denser, have the simpler art, if any, whereas in Britain it is just the opposite. Summing up, a similar grammar underlies the rock art of both areas, but in each case the factual expression takes a very different course.

Fredell (2010) suggests the possible existence of contacts – fuelled perhaps by the tin trade – between Galicia and Sweden during the first millennium BC, based on the association deer + sun reported in the rock art of both regions. We see two major problems: no hard proof exists in Galicia of such a late chronology for these representations and, secondly, that association is already present in several Iberian ‘Symbolic’ Bell Beakers from the end of the third millennium (Garrido and Muñoz 2000). Moreover, the assumption that circular motifs (and cupmarks) are solar representations is far from demonstrated and, anyway, only one clear sun depiction exists in the whole body of Galician rock art.

The growing evidence of interaction among several regions of the European Atlantic Façade during late prehistory, along with new information about the mobility of individuals (Evans *et al.* 2006), makes thinkable that similarities between the Galician rock art and that of Ireland and Britain are rooted in more or less sporadic contacts between these areas, although their nature and significance is far from established.

The discovery of rock art in the Ons Island, 4 km off the coast of the Ría de Pontevedra, proves that the prehistoric communities of Galicia undertook coastal navigation from, at least, the third millennium BC, probably using small wooden canoes similar to those of the Iron Age found in the Limia River (Alves and Rieth 2007). Furthermore, the presence of megalithic mounds, rock art and domestic sites in points commanding the crossing of the Rías (thus avoiding long detours)

(Rodríguez *et al.* forthcoming), might be further proof of the importance of short sea trips for these communities. Deep-sea voyages are another matter: the links between northern Iberia and Brittany have been frequently explained as the result of direct contacts between ‘finisterres’, avoiding the dangerous coast of the Bay of Biscay (Cunliffe 2004); but this option, as is the case of direct contact with the British Isles, would have made it necessary to navigate without visual contact of the coast for much more than 48 hours (Naveiro 1991), demanding seafaring vessels and good skills of navigation. Thus, coastal navigation seems more likely, even considering the dangers of the coast and, accepting the existence of contacts between Britain and northern Iberia during the main rock carving episode, it seems more reasonable that these would have occurred via ‘ports of call’ such as Brittany.

It is true, however, that we are taking a pragmatic approach to the question of sea travel in south-west Atlantic Europe, but we should consider the eventually transcendent character of those trips. After all, there are many sources (literary, ethnographic, mythological) pointing towards the symbolic connotations associated with such perilous journeys, designed to alleviate the fear that was naturally inspired by the prospect of long distance travel. And, in this framework of thought, we might keep in mind that most evidence gathered on Atlantic seafaring has more to do with the exceptional than with the day-to-day existence, be that so-called prestige items (Beakers, copper weapons), art or people directly associated with these.

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A rock with a view: new perspectives on Danish rock art

Louise Felding

This article examines Danish rock art from the Bronze Age in relation to its surrounding landscapes. Furthermore, it investigates the different media upon which the rock art appear as bedrock is non-existent in the main part of Denmark. For the spatial landscape analyses viewshed modelling showed that rock carvings on free-standing stone boulders had a markedly different landscape setting than rock carvings found on bedrock and in burial contexts. The boulders were placed lower in the landscape and with limited visibility to other rock carvings. Rock carvings in burial contexts and on bedrock, however, were placed topographically higher and had better views of their surroundings and other rock carvings in the area.

These observations led to the conclusion that rock carvings in different contexts engaged people in different ways. Rock carvings on boulders appeared in secluded landscape settings that required a local knowledge of the area, which could indicate individual worship. On the other hand, rock carvings in burial contexts or on bedrock were placed in an open landscape setting and therefore were more likely to have involved larger groups of people participating in burials and assemblies of ritual character, presumably to secure the world order and the power of the elite.

KEYWORDS: rock art, Bronze Age Denmark, landscape archaeology, spatial analysis

Introduction

Danish rock carvings belong to the southern Scandinavian rock art tradition dating to the Bronze Age (c. 1700–500 BC). Traditionally the core area for the Southern Scandinavian Bronze Age Culture comprises northern Germany, Denmark, middle and southern Sweden and southern Norway. The imagery is broadly seen as an

expression of fertility and agriculture but maritime aspects are also represented by the many ship carvings connected to shorelines and coasts (Ling 2008). The regional aspect of rock art is gaining more emphasis and it is clear that rock art in inland Denmark has a different expression from the rock carvings in coastal areas of Sweden.

The Bronze Age societal order in Denmark and Scandinavia represents a socially stratified society, generally labelled aristocratic with chieftains and chiefdoms (Kaul 1998: 54). The development of the elitetarian ideology should be seen in the light of the trade networks that brought the bronze from central Europe to northern Europe (Larsson 1999: 50; Kristiansen and Larsson 2005). The power in the society was based on a mutually dependent relationship between the high and low orders of society (Artursson 2007: 91).

The meaning of rock art remains an enigma but the rock carvings can be seen in part as an expression of ideology and religion. The sun and its journey across the sky is the major element in the Bronze Age cosmology, and this is clearly expressed on bronze artefacts such as the razors, however some elements of this imagery can also be seen in the rock art, but it is apparent that the different media played different roles in conveying different myths and stories (Kaul 2004; Bradley, this volume). Aspects of fertility and death are a natural part of the Bronze Age life, and thus equally expressed in the iconography – not least through the rock carvings. Local interpretations and use of the symbols must have been based on a power structure where men in power would have legitimised their claim to the land by communicating with ancestors and higher powers through these symbols. The function of the rock carvings can therefore also be seen as an expression of socio-religious myths and rituals as part of maintaining the power balance in society.

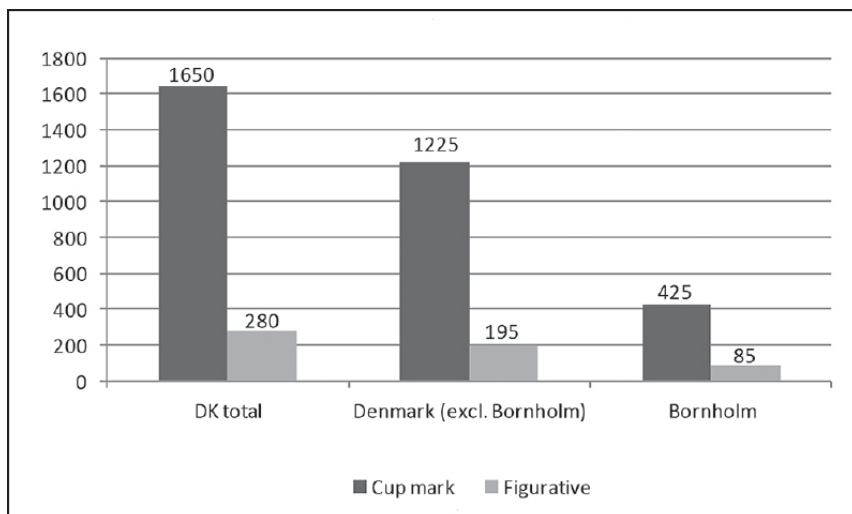


Fig. 6.1. Column chart showing number of cup-mark stones and stones with figurative motifs found in Denmark (data@Kulturstyrelsen 2009).

Motifs and symbols in Danish rock art

The most common motif in Denmark is the cupmark symbol, which far outnumbers the figurative motifs (Fig. 6.1). As the cupmark symbol is the most common motif in Denmark as a whole it is seen in a variety of different archaeological contexts. Therefore, one must assume that the symbol has been an integrated part of Bronze Age society both in the social and religious sphere. Most probably, the cupmark represents the cyclical thought connected to birth, rebirth and fertility. However, the symbol has such broad possibilities for interpretation that the exact meaning must have varied in relation to other motifs, in which context it appears and for what purpose it was carved.

When it comes to the figurative motifs the same range of motifs occur throughout Denmark (Fig. 6.2) with geometric symbols, ships, feet and hand motifs as the most common, but with regional concentrations of specific motif types. The hand symbol is seen as a regional phenomenon especially related to the island of Zealand. On Bornholm the ship motif appears more often whereas the geometrical figures and wheel crosses are the most common motifs in the rest of Denmark. In some cases there is a clear link between motif and certain contexts and/or landscape settings. The ship symbol is often connected to water and the hand symbol is clearly linked to graves.



Fig. 6.2. Typical Danish Bronze Age rock art motifs (photos by author with permission from the National Museum Denmark).

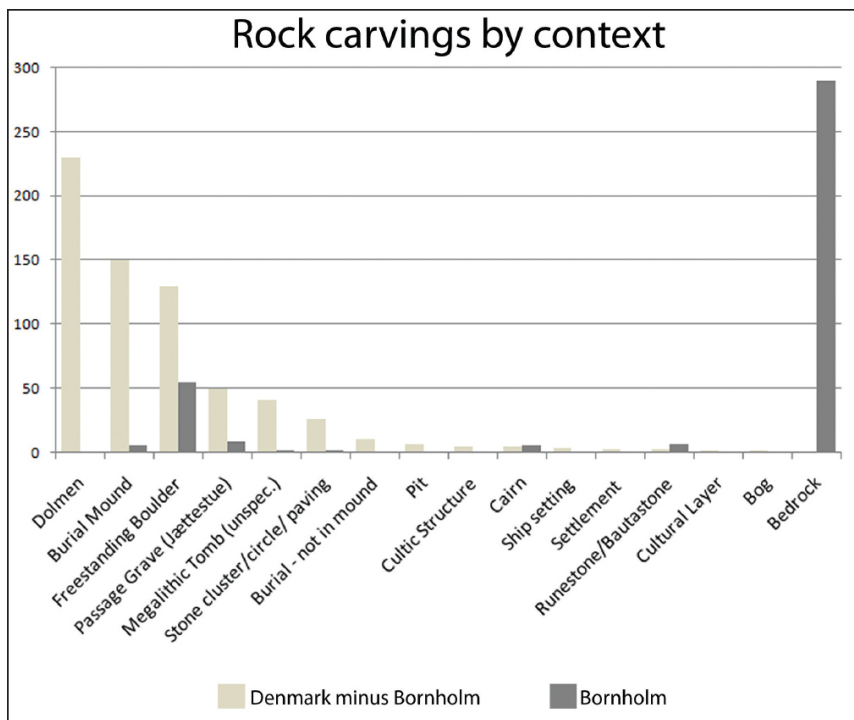


Fig. 6.3. Rock carvings by context in Denmark. The dataset shows a total of 1027 in situ rock carvings recorded in Denmark (657 from the Danish area – 84 with figurative motifs, and 370 in situ carvings from Bornholm – 76 with figurative motifs) (data@Kulturstyrelsen 2009).

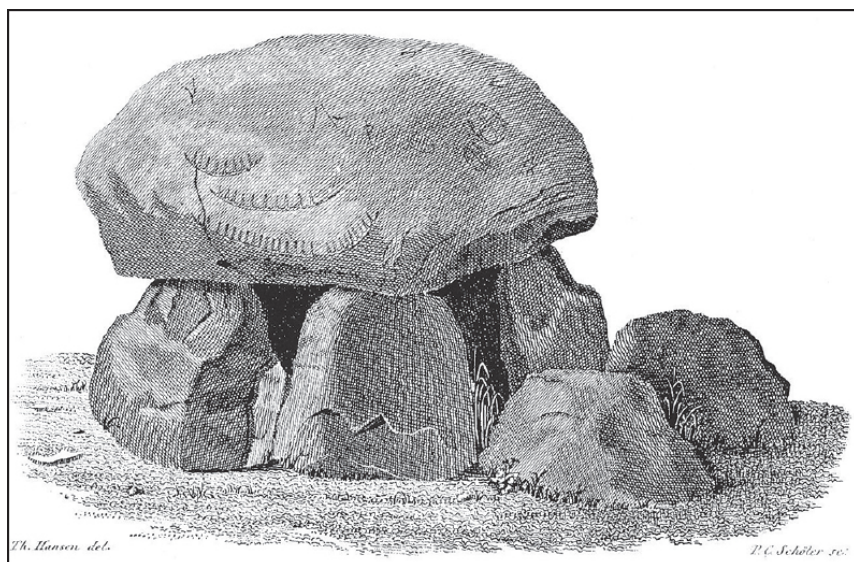


Fig. 6.4. Rock carvings on the megalithic dolmen 'Dilhøj' in northern Zealand (from Glob 1969: 7).

Within Denmark there is a noticeable difference in what contexts the rock carvings appear. From the main Danish area outside Bornholm rock carvings appear in many different contexts due to the lack of bedrock (Fig. 6.3). Rock carvings on boulders and stones often appear on already built Neolithic megalithic tombs (Fig. 6.4) and in burial mounds from the Bronze Age. Free-standing boulders with rock carvings found *in situ* are also known (Fig. 6.5) but are unfortunately not as common as they would have been in the Bronze Age due to cultivation through time, many stones having been removed from their original position.

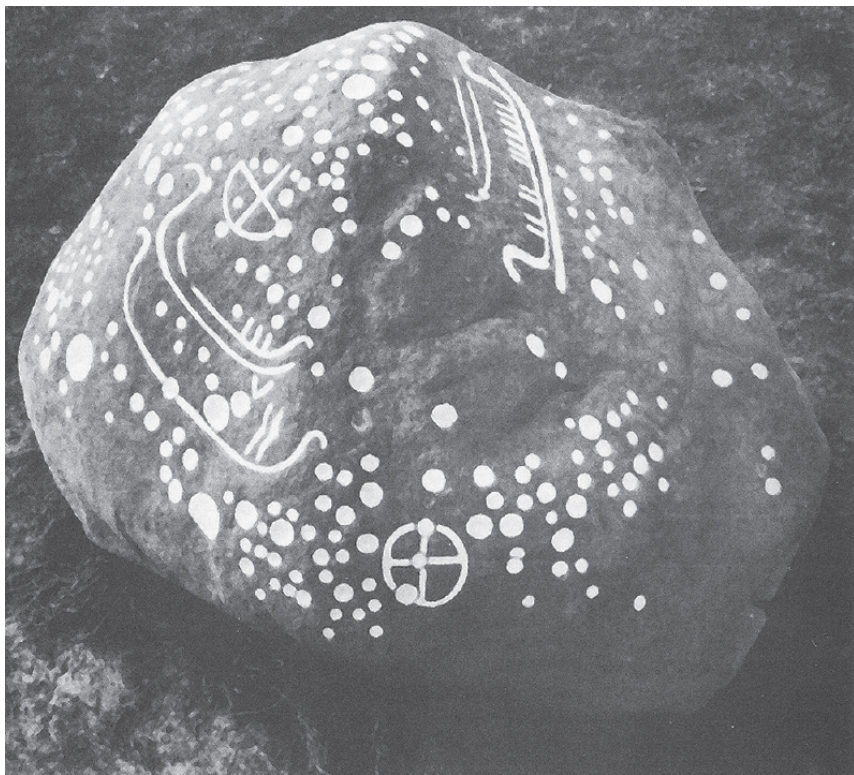


Fig. 6.5. Boulder with rock carvings, Hyllingbjerg, northern Zealand (photo from Kaul 1998: 94).

Geology and rock art

Denmark is geologically distinct from the rest of Scandinavia because of its lack of bedrock, and this is reflected in the lower number of rock carvings registered in Denmark. Bedrock occurs on the island of Bornholm but is nonexistent in the remaining parts of Denmark (Fig. 6.6). Bornholm is famous for its rock carvings because here we find elaborate figurative carvings on bedrock, as in the rest of Scandinavia. In the remaining areas of Denmark the carvings are constrained to

other media such as glacial erratic boulders and already erected megalithic tombs. In these areas the carvings are usually simplified in their expression (such as cup marks and geometric motifs) and bear less resemblance to the elaborate motifs of the rest of southern Scandinavia. Most rock art research in Denmark has therefore focused on the rock carvings on Bornholm; however, this article wishes to examine the rock art beyond Bornholm in order to create a fuller understanding of the rock art in Denmark.



Fig. 6.6. Rock outcrop at Madsebakke, northern Bornholm. Photo: Louise Felding.

Rock art research in Scandinavia

The last decade in Scandinavian rock art research has been a very innovative period. The discourse has seen a shift from solely looking at the iconography of the rock art and moved towards a contextual approach where the archaeological contexts and finds are included, which have resulted in a broader understanding of the meaning of the rock art.

Landscape archaeology and social archaeology have played an increasing role in the interpretation of rock art. When studying landscapes and the archaeological remains within it we try to approach and understand past populations, their movements and social interactions in the landscapes that they inhabited. In recent rock art research the relationship between the individual and the rock art is a focal point as well as the relationship between the rock art and its place in the social and physical landscape.

As archaeologists we are specialised in material culture but in order to give a voice to the people of the past – the people who produced and used these material objects – we have to draw on aspects from both social theory and landscape archaeology. By applying social theories and recognizing archaeology as a discipline with pronounced social facet it is possible to enter a dialogue with the

material culture and thereby gain a slightly deeper understanding of the meaning of (in this instance) rock art. Examples of this way of working have proven fruitful in the past decade of Scandinavian rock art research and have managed to include the concepts of agency, settlement and landscape in the rock art research, e.g. *Rock Art as Social Representation* (Goldhahn 1999), *Elevated Rock Art* (Ling 2008), *Trialectic Archaeology* (Nordenborg Myhre 2004) and *Bilder av betydelse* (Wahlgren 2002).

Because rock carvings are so rich in symbolic meaning they present a unique opportunity to engage with and explore prehistoric cosmological and social relations. Therefore, social archaeology can provide useful tools for the study of rock art (Tilley 1999: 133). Phenomenology has also played a role in rock art research where the bodily experience can be a valid part of the interpretation when visiting a rock art site (Bradley *et al.* 2002; Tilley 2004: 214–215). Rock art is often viewed in the religious sphere of the Bronze Age world, but it is important to remember that it was also a part of daily life in the Bronze Age societies, so therefore we should not just see the carvings as something extraordinary but also view them in an everyday context (Skoglund 2005: 158). There is no doubt that rock carvings encompass duality and were deeply rooted in the religious and cosmological sphere of the Bronze Age, but that said it is important that we do not forget the importance of the ‘rituals of the everyday’ and the role rock art played in this.

Scandinavian rock art research today is in a place where it can draw on earlier iconographic studies and research, which combined with newer landscape studies, archaeological context and social theories, provides potential for an indepth view on the rock art and its meaning.

New studies on Danish rock art

The research presented here is based on the author’s *magisterkonferens* undertaken at Copenhagen University: *Rock Carvings in Context: Studies of Danish Rock Art in Relation to Landscape and Society in Scandinavian Bronze Age* (Felding 2009). One aim of this work was to present an up-to-date catalogue of known Danish rock carving sites. The latest full overview of Danish rock art was published by P. V. Glob in 1969 in *Danmarks Helleristninger*, a catalogue that contained 871 registered rock carving sites (Glob 1969). This provided a foundation for the new work, but this information was updated by incorporating newly documented rock art from the national Danish heritage database ‘*Fund og Fortidsminder*’, which provided significant new material. To supplement this, several newly published rock art sites in relevant journals and articles were also registered (Vebæk 1980; Adoranten 1998–2008; AUD 1984–2005).

After the data collection 1784 rock carving stones from Denmark were registered, nearly doubling the numbers from Glob’s catalogue of 1969. Of this total, 1027 rock carvings were found to be *in situ* (Fig. 6.7). Thus, 40 years after the last major published work on Danish rock carvings, the time is ripe for a review of Danish rock art that takes the newly gathered material into account.

Data analysis and methodology

A database (‘*Hellerist*’) was specially designed to facilitate data analysis for this

research. This is a relational database built around the individual rock carving stone or panel and designed to make it possible to add several values to the individual stone/panel. Several relational tables were constructed to assign individual values to the rock art stones, such as motifs, date, archaeological context, landscape context and administrative data.

An important aspect of rock art research is studying the context in the landscape inhabited by the carvings. For this research topographical analyses and a variety of viewshed analyses were carried out as part of the landscape analyses. For all spatial and landscape analyses it is important to know that the rock art is *in situ* and therefore only these rock carvings were used.

In general, the pattern of the newly registered material corresponds with Glob's results. The motifs have not changed and the cup mark is still the dominant motif in the Danish material, but the number and variety of *in situ* contexts in which the rock art appear have increased presenting new possibilities for a variety of analyses.

Viewshed analyses

For the spatial analyses viewsheds were used. Viewshed analyses are computer-based visibility analyses which can provide theoretical probabilities for the line of sight from one point to another. The viewsheds are based on a digital terrain model (in this case produced in Vertical Mapper), derived from digital maps of Denmark with contour intervals of 5 m. In this case the viewshed modelling was used to make observations about the placement of rock carvings in the landscape regarding visibility to other rock carvings sites and/or other important features in the surrounding area such as contemporary archaeological features and settlements. It is important to note that these analyses do not take any vegetation into account and they are therefore not a true image of the visibility from a given point in the Bronze Age, but they do give an idea of the importance of the topographical landscape setting (for more information on the methodology and criteria for viewshed analyses see Conolly and Lake 2006: 228–233). Two types of viewshed modelling were used: single and cumulative viewsheds.

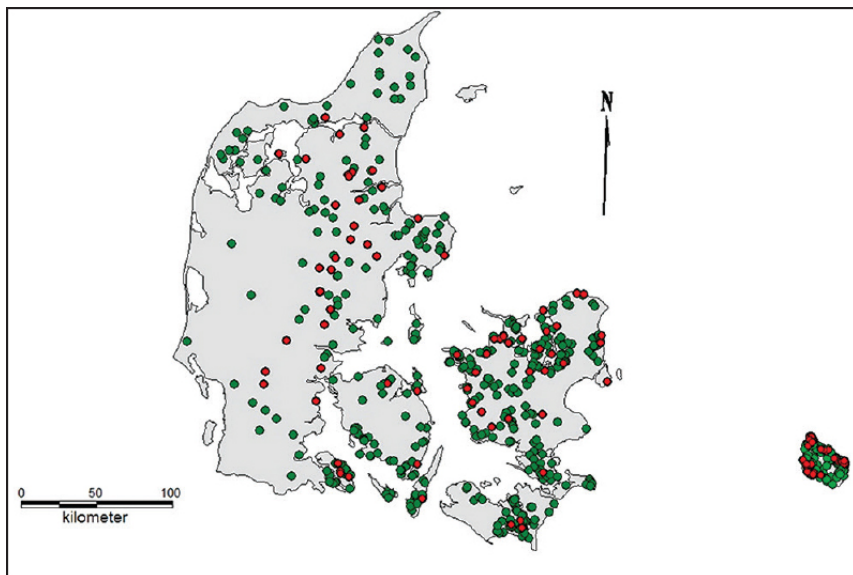


Fig. 6.7. Distribution map showing the 1027 registered *in situ* rock carvings in Denmark. Cupmarks are marked with green dots and figurative motifs with red dots (data@Kulturstyrelsen 2009).

The single viewsheds calculate the visibility from one chosen point in a 360° radius based on the topographical data from the terrain model.

For the main body of *in situ* material cumulative viewshed analyses were carried out. These analyses show what (theoretical) visibility there has been between multiple localities and from where in the landscape these localities have been visible.

Correlations between motif type and visibility were not established clearly because cup marks are the dominant motif type in Denmark, so unfortunately very little could be said about certain motifs having a higher degree of visibility than others.

Rock art and visibility – a summary of viewshed analyses results

In the following the results of the landscape analyses of the different context groups on which rock art appear will be presented by geographical regions in Denmark.

In situ boulders

In the main part of Denmark (outside Bornholm) the *in situ* free-standing boulders are typically an eastern phenomenon. The main body of material is found on Zealand, but boulders are also found in smaller numbers throughout the country. The free-standing boulders appear to be connected to coastal areas and are mainly found on clay soils. The cumulative analyses show that the boulders more often than not have a limited line of vision which seems directed towards certain views. Typically the views direct themselves towards the sea, coast and fjord areas.

There are, however, also examples of inland settings which are not orientated towards water. This is seen in central Jutland and Djursland. Here the boulders seem to form a line in the landscape that may indicate a route of travel and movement.

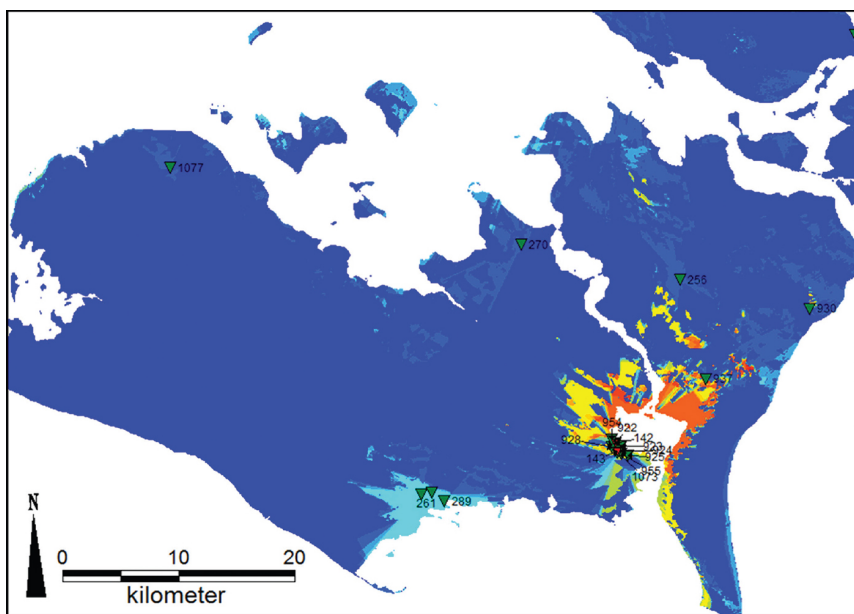


Fig. 6.8. Cumulative viewshed of in situ boulders in the area of Lolland Falster, southern Denmark. A coastal focus is clear with the orange and red areas showing highly visible areas from the rock art sites (green triangles) (data@Kulturstyrelsen 2009).

In the region of southern Funen and the islands south of Funen we see a strong connection with water. The boulders are typically located within view of at least two other rock carving boulders. There is a marked tendency for the direction of vision towards the water and the surrounding coastal areas. This might not be so surprising, but interestingly there is little visibility to the inland areas behind the boulders which supports the case of a directed or controlled field of vision from the rocks.

In the region of Lolland Falster we again see a general connection to the water and coastal positions. In southern Lolland a small cluster of cupmark boulders seem to form their own little unit with high visibility towards each other but limited vision to the hinterlands and other rock carvings in the area (Fig. 6.8).

In the region of south-west Zealand we see the pattern of coastal positions repeated. In one place on the western coast, we find several cupmark boulders with a line of sight towards the east coast of Funen, where more free-standing boulders are situated. This suggests that an awareness of the marked stones on the opposing coast existed. In northern Zealand all the freestanding boulders have strong coastal connections and again the boulders do not seem to communicate with the landscape or other rock carving sites in the hinterland (see Fig. 6.5 for

photo and Fig. 6.9 for viewshed of the freestanding boulder ‘Hyllingbjerg’).

However, there are no rules without exceptions. In the central part of Zealand we find a boulder with a more atypical landscape setting as it has a broad and open field of vision. In another location we find a boulder on a hillside along the lake Tissø where a passage becomes visible where there is always a line of sight to at least two to four other rock carving locations. Maybe this could be a possible sign of a passageway in the landscape?

The main body of analysed *in situ* boulders clearly suggests that they had a focal point towards water and coastal areas and thoughts of communication and transport by water are likely interpretations. This also corresponds very well with research on Swedish rock art that has shown a pronounced maritime connection (Ling 2008) and the ship symbolism that is ever present in the Scandinavian Bronze Age iconography.

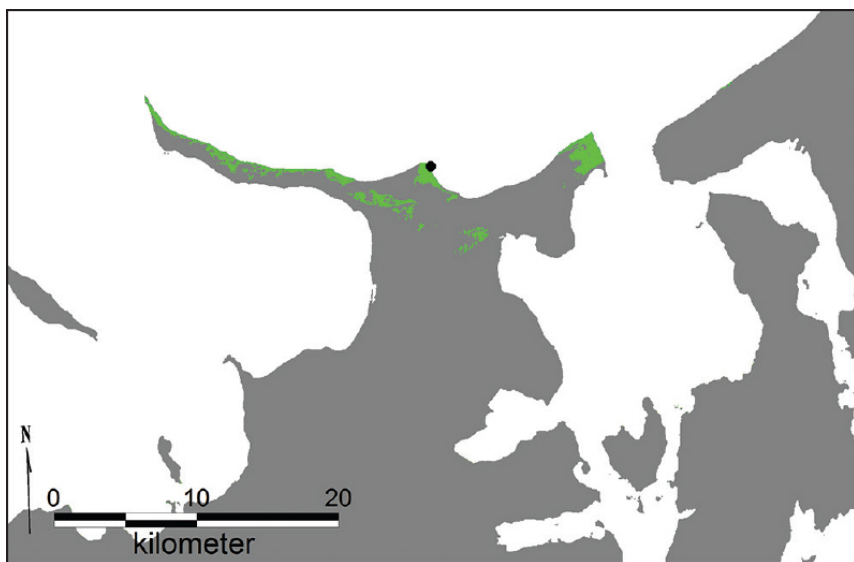


Fig. 6.9. Single viewshed showing the visibility from the boulder ‘Hyllingbjerg’. Visible area marked with green (data@Kulturstyrelsen 2009).

On the island of Bornholm the majority of the freestanding boulders are on the southern part of the island, but boulders from all around the island are known. The visibility pattern is slightly different on Bornholm compared to the rest of Denmark, and here boulders seem to be visible from – and have visibility to – several other rock carving locations. It is possible to move around in routes on Bornholm with a constant (theoretical) visibility to one to two rock art locales. This does not imply that the actual rock or stone is visible but that there is visibility to areas and *places* with known rock art.

Bedrock

Bedrock only exists on Bornholm, and here mainly in the northern part of the island. This is also where the main body of the registered material is situated. In

general, several panels are situated together in concentrations thereby creating intervisibility between them more often than not (Fig. 6.10).

Interestingly, most of the rock carvings on the northern coast generally have visibility towards the coastal stretch between Tejn and Gudhjem (central part of the north coast). It is interesting to note that two figurative locations in this stretch are within the visible coastal zone from the other rock art sites whereas the nearby cup-mark locales are ‘hidden’ and out of the visible zone.

Megalithic tombs

Megalithic tombs with rock art (like megalithic tombs in general) are situated on higher ground in the landscape with a general coastal location and connection to water. The visibility from the megalithic tombs is generally good and they seem to dominate or inhabit their landscape with a powerful presence. It is a distinctively different pattern from the location of the free-standing boulders (see Fig. 6.4 for illustration and Fig. 6.11 for viewshed of the dolmen ‘Dilhøj’).



Fig. 6.10. Rock outcrops at Hammersholm. The rock carvings are barely visible without paint (photo: Louise Felding).

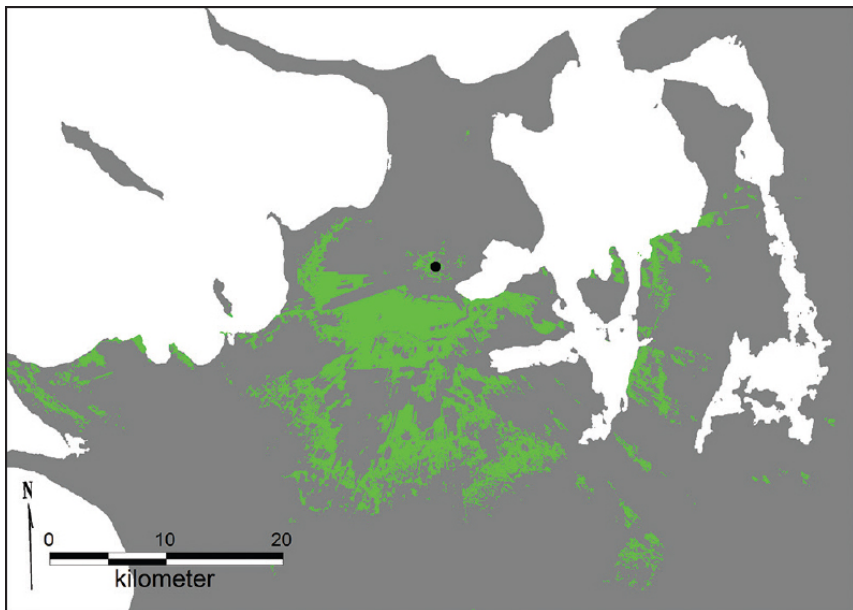


Fig. 6.11. Viewshed analysis showing the visibility from the megalithic tomb 'Dilhøj'. Visible areas marked with green (data@Kulturstyrelsen 2009).

Burial mounds

Rock carvings in burial mounds occur in all of Denmark but a concentration is seen on the Jutland peninsula (except for the westernmost part of Jutland). Generally, the rock art in burial mounds is found on the kerbstones surrounding the mound or as part of the burial on coffin slabs (Fig. 6.12).

The burial mounds are typically situated on higher ground and therefore generally have good visibility to their surrounding areas, and can be seen from afar when travelling in the landscape. In Jutland the burial mounds seem to create several linear passages which again can be interpreted as routes of travel and communication (Johansen *et al.* 2003: 38; Müller 1904; Thrane 1998: 278).



Fig. 6.12. 'Truehøjgård', rock carving stone from a burial in a burial mound (photo from Glob 1969: 32).

Local landscapes – rock art contextualised

Detailed local landscape analyses were undertaken on three selected regions where rock art sites could be seen in relation to other contemporary archaeological

features. Single viewsheds were used on the individual rock art sites to see if the theoretical visibility could help with the interpretation of the rock art and possibly provide patterns for the placement in the landscape. The regions selected for closer analyses were Thy in north-west Jutland, the area around Isefjorden in northern Zealand and northern Bornholm. Archaeological excavations have been undertaken in all areas, shedding light on the Bronze Age activities in the respective areas.

Thy

In Thy all the registered rock carvings consist of cupmarks. The carvings are mostly found in burial mounds which suggest that rock carvings (cupmarks) here are closely related to burial mounds and burial rites, but they are also seen on megalithic tombs and on free-standing boulders. The burial mounds are situated in a monumental position in the open treeless landscape. One would therefore expect that the people in the contemporary settlements in Thy would have known about the rock carvings in the mounds, since the burial mounds were visible from quite some distance and they would have made a striking view imbued with symbolism.

The one *in situ* free-standing boulder with cup marks recorded in Thy reveals a very different pattern. The single viewshed showed that the boulder was placed in a low, secluded landscape setting with limited visibility, which immediately indicates a very different use of the symbols in comparison with the carvings in the burial mounds. One could imagine that the burials and the carvings there would involve the whole society as a collective whereas the boulders in the secluded 'hidden' areas were a place for more individual use or worship for smaller groups or individuals.

Northern Zealand

In the area around Isefjorden, northern Zealand we find the highest concentration of figurative rock carving motifs in Denmark, outside Bornholm. It is also in this area that many spectacular finds from the Bronze Age have been unearthed, for example, the sun chariot from Trundholm mose.

In northern Zealand during the Bronze Age the landscape was undergoing a transformation begun in the Neolithic, being deforested for agricultural use, and the newly built burial mounds would have been a manifestation of the land, clearly recognizable over long distances (Thrane 1998: 272ff).

Excavations of Bronze Age settlements reveal signs of the economy, indicating that the people would have used their local area for resources in combination with growing crops, thus marine shells have been found on sites close to the sea or fjord, but not on inland sites where finds indicating farming and agriculture were more dominant (Lomborg 1980: 124).

Single viewshed analyses were carried out on all the rock art sites in the area and these confirmed the results from the cumulative viewsheds.

In this area of northern Zealand we also find the structure known as the cultic house from Sandagergård, which contained several burials and rock carving stones with hand motifs (Kaul 1987). The viewshed from this site showed that the line of sight was controlled in an easterly direction and was slightly cut off towards the west. Several other rock carving sites (megalithic tombs and burial mounds) and recorded Bronze Age settlements were visible from here.

The rock carving sites in northern Zealand have a markedly coastal focus, where the line of sight is often directed towards water and the opposing coast. It is

certain that the rock carvings have in some way been an integral part of the society with an implied focus on communication.

Northern Bornholm

On northern Bornholm, the localities Madsebakke, Hammersholm, Blåholt and Brogård were chosen for the landscape analyses. All the localities contained several rock art sites with both figurative and cupmark motifs (Fig. 6.13).

All of the material that was analysed seems to have been placed in open landscape contexts on the borderline between a medium and high landscape setting, generally with good visibility. However, the intervisibility between the panels at each locale is not always given because of the local terrain, which can create secluded spots for individual panels. There were no clear patterns of visibility between rock carving sites with figurative motifs and rock carving sites with cupmarks. Generally, the same landscape features or settings were seen for the figurative and cupmark locations.

Rock art, topography and landscape

The rock carvings in Denmark appear on different types of rock and in different contexts due to the nature of the geology. However, all of the Danish carvings belong to the southern Scandinavian rock carving tradition (definition by Sognnes 2001: 14). The distinguishing factor in the Danish rock carvings is the fact that bedrock occurs only on Bornholm, but generally the main repertoire of motifs is seen throughout Denmark and cup marks are the most common symbol over all.

This does not mean that the rock carvings had the same meaning all over Denmark – it is more likely that the symbols have had regional and local anchoring and possibly several layers of meaning. Thus the same symbol could have different meanings depending on where and in which context it was situated.

The topographic analyses have shown that rock carvings placed in burial mounds and megalithic tombs are mainly found on higher ground. Only the *in situ* boulders and some megalithic dolmens tend to be located in lower topographical settings. Generally, the rock carvings are related to water and coastal positions and in cases where inland locations are chosen they seem to have a broader view over the surrounding areas. On Bornholm there is a tendency for the carvings to be more visible from afar than in the rest of Denmark.

When looking at the results from the topographical studies of the Danish material it is worth mentioning Richard Bradley's work on open and closed landscape settings for rock art in Britain (Bradley 1997: 80). Bradley argues that rock carvings in a closed landscape setting necessitate a local knowledge of their placement, and also the meaning of the rock carvings is locally founded. On the other hand rock carvings in an open landscape setting with prominent views which are easily seen from afar are directed towards not only locals but individuals travelling from other regions, and therefore portray commonly known symbolism.

In the Danish material there is a distinction between the topographical placement of rock carvings found in burial mounds and megalithic tombs compared to rock carvings found on *in situ* boulders. This must have had significance when it comes to understanding and interpreting the meaning of the rock art. In the Danish material the cupmark is seen as the most common motif in all contexts and in all landscape settings, which implies that the symbol could

carry different meaning and symbolism depending on its landscape setting and context.



Fig. 6.13. Ship motifs from Brogård, Bornholm. The ship symbol is common in northern Bornholm and the connection to the sea is obvious (photo: Gerhard Milstreu).

As the free-standing boulders appear in closed landscape settings this indicates a local knowledge of the landscape, and these places could therefore be interpreted as places of individual worship and/or special places for smaller local groups. Perhaps the *in situ* boulders have served as places for everyday worship and/or rituals that would ensure the daily life and health of the family?

In contrast to the closed settings of the free-standing boulders, we see the burial mounds, megalithic tombs and bedrock locales which generally are in highly visible places. There are, however, distinctions between these three contexts. The burial mounds are generally highly visible from afar and presumably were known locally as well as regionally. The rock carvings, however, are sealed within the mound not to be seen and thus should be regarded in relation to the burial activity in which they take part. Rock art carvings on megalithic tombs and bedrock, on the other hand, were left uncovered after they were made, and were therefore meant to be seen.

In the main part of Denmark outside Bornholm, most *in situ* rock carvings are found on megalithic tombs. These tombs are some of the earliest monuments in Denmark, and therefore already possess a high degree of significance and importance to the temporal landscape and collective memory. The megalithic

tombs are also often visible from afar and the rock carvings here are visible and exposed to the world as they are often situated on the capstones.

There seems to be a difference in the symbolism and use of the rock carvings depending upon the open or sealed context in which they appear. It is argued that the rock carvings on megalithic tombs, bedrock and in burial mounds, all with high visibility in the landscape, have involved the society as a collective but with different rituals. Burials have invited large groups to gather and have involved rituals to do with the passing of the dead. The reasons for assembly at rock carving sites on megalithic tombs and outcrops would not necessarily have involved the dead, but are more likely to have been gatherings that would secure the world order and the power of the elite. Thus there seems to be a distinction in the use of rock art depending on its context. The rock art in burial mounds is related to burials and would have been sealed in the mound after the burial had taken place, and this would transform its symbolic meaning. A different use of rock carvings is seen on the open area carvings (megalithic tombs and rock outcrops) where the carvings would remain visible and continue to convey messages to the public even after the ceremonies had taken place.

The carvings on bedrock found on Bornholm are all placed in an open and visible context. These places are interpreted as having had the same function as the megalithic tombs with rock carvings in the areas of Denmark without bedrock. Both types of rock art sites would have been used for larger assemblies, and therefore it is argued that the rituals and activities taking place here would have been part of a public display as part of an interaction with the whole society as a collective, with the objective to maintain the power balance in society.

The contemporary Bronze Age settlements are found near or in the vicinity of the rock art sites, and the settlements are most usually in the visibility zone from the rock carvings with a high topographical setting. It is therefore presumed that the local population would be very aware of the special places marked with these symbols, but we must also assume that the other burial mounds and megalithic tombs without rock carvings must have been part of signifying a local area and part of a communication strategy marking the land for foreigners and travellers.

Rock art in an open placement in the landscape seems to call out for the attention of the community. Excavations near rock carving sites can therefore produce valuable insights into the nature of these activities.

Excavating rock art: signs of people and traces of activity

In recent years several excavations have been carried out on rock art sites across Europe and a remarkable similarity in the finds assemblages is apparent (Anati 2008; Bengtsson and Ling 2008; Bengtsson *et al.* 2005; Bertilsson 2004; Bertilsson and Bertilsson 2006; Johansen 1979; Jones 2011; Kaul 1987; 2006a; 2006b; Lindgaard 2006; Løden 2006; Nilsson 2010; Sørensen 2006). Despite the fact that it is difficult to prove that these finds are contemporaneous with the carvings, it is likely that the striking similarities observed in the excavated traces of activity means that they can be linked to the rock carvings.

On all the excavated sites human activity was found in the immediate context of the rock surface. In some places this activity had taken place near wooden fences or smaller stone walls forming enclosures round the rock surface. Stone paving,

cooking pits and fireplaces and other signs of burning are all recurring features amongst the excavated rock carving sites. Often burnt clay, daub, flint and pottery are found, sometimes in quantities that suggest ritual offerings. The stone paving suggests that there must have been regular activity and foot traffic near the panels. They could also be part of a stage or platform for performing rituals. The presence of fire is significant and has no doubt played an important role during the activities around the rock carvings, but some traces of fire can also be linked to later historic periods, where at some sites deliberate destruction of the symbols was achieved by exposing the rock surface to heat to crack it.

The excavated sites show a high degree of continuity where activities seem to have taken place before the rock carvings were made, and often continued long after they fell out of use. The excavations have proven that not only have special activities taken place near and in connection with the rock carvings but also that the *places* chosen for the rock carvings already possessed significance and meaning before the carvings were made.

There is an interesting dichotomy between the open and closed landscape settings and the visibility of rock art. Excavations show that some rock surfaces in otherwise open and visible landscape settings have been shielded off or hidden behind enclosures (for example Madsebakke, northern Bornholm). This suggests that the visible topographical setting does not always mean that the rock art has been visible to the public. However, awareness about the rock art and the location of the site must have been common knowledge. It does raise the question of whether the rock art was meant to be hidden, i.e. was it only visible to a restricted audience?

From a Danish perspective it would be very interesting to examine and excavate more rock carving sites outside Bornholm. Perhaps it will then be possible to detect signs of the activities that took place in the Bronze Age near rock carvings on the megalithic tombs and in burial mounds.

Denmark and southern Scandinavia

As the Danish rock carvings belong to the southern Scandinavian rock carving tradition we must assume a high degree of super-regionality in the motifs and one must assume that the same figures and symbols would have been recognisable in large parts of Scandinavia.

In Denmark, however, there are markedly fewer rock carvings than in the rest of Scandinavia, but instead the concentration of bronze objects is greater here. Previously the lack of bronze in areas rich in rock carvings has been seen as expression of a peripheral placement of the southern Scandinavian Bronze Age culture and the rock carvings were seen as compensation for the bronze objects (Malmer 1981). This model, however, has been discussed by Kalle Sognnes who instead suggests that the rock carving traditions in the northern part of southern Scandinavia can be seen as ethnic and cultural markers against the contemporary hunter-gatherer societies in northern Scandinavia. Thus, the rock carvings could have made their way from fringes towards the core of the southern Scandinavian Bronze Age culture (Sognnes 1995).

Richard Bradley suggests that areas where rock art is found on capstones and in tombs are areas where the metal and bronze work had a more significant role to

play and therefore there was less focus on the rock art (Bradley, this volume). It is likely that the bronze played a greater role here, simply because there was more of it. Combined with the lack of suitable bedrock on which to produce rock art, this could have led to more 'artefact' and 'portable object'-founded rituals where portable objects were used to conduct some of the same rituals that are depicted on the rock panels in the rest of southern Scandinavia. We know examples of bronze artefacts resembling the sun disc and sun holder, but smaller fist-sized stones with cupmarks have also been found, and they could all have been used in rituals where objects were used for dramatic effect.

The bronze artefacts share the same imagery as the rock carvings, but as Richard Bradley points out the bronze razors show more conformity and less variation in their symbolism compared to the rock art. They could therefore have been used to convey different stories and should not necessarily be interpreted in the same way.

It is suggested that the rock carvings in Denmark (outside Bornholm) are generally of an early date, and that the use of the rock carvings declined in the later Bronze Age, when bronze artefacts, such as the razors, become more dominant. In the northern parts of southern Scandinavia (and Bornholm) the ship symbols have a longer continuity, right into the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (fifth century BC). It would be interesting to suggest that places with rock carvings on capstones of megalithic tombs that were used for places of gathering and/or worship in the Early Bronze Age (even Neolithic) continued to be places of importance, but with less significance paid to the rock carvings in the later stages of the Bronze Age. The focus instead shifted to portable media, such as bronze artefacts, as part of the ritual storytelling that once involved the rock art.

The majority of the rock carvings in Scandinavia are found on outcrops, many of which are in an open landscape context, as on Bornholm. However, there are also examples of bedrock sites in closed landscape settings here, especially cupmark localities. Lasse Bengtsson has suggested that the cupmark, because of its simple form and long-lasting symbolism, has been used by the everyday population and not always as part of large scale ceremonies (Bengtsson 2004b). To say that simple motifs have not been used in large scale ceremonies or used by the elite is too simple. However, the Danish material does seem to support the idea that some places have not been used as large scale meeting grounds for ritual activities, but should instead be seen as places for everyday use and worship. Sadly, there is not a wide enough variety of figurative motifs in the Danish material to be able to draw any distinction in the use of the carvings on this basis.

In south Scandinavia the rock carvings played an important part in the contemporary societies and have been used individually as well as involving the society as whole, setting the scene for activities of probable ritual and religious character. The South Scandinavian rock carvings are not unusual in graves (Widholm 1999; Randsborg 1993; Goldhahn 1999; Syvertsen 2002), a phenomenon commonly seen in the Danish material. Also, communication and interaction with the landscape has played an important part for the function of the rock carvings, and they are often found in connection with waterways, roads and communication networks (Bengtsson 2004b: 172).

It is a general understanding that the locations for rock carvings were chosen because the places already possessed significance (Wahlgren 1998: 92). This is supported by excavated rock carving sites, which show a pattern of deep

continuity. The proven time-depth of many of the rock carving sites is important. It shows that the places had symbolic value before the rock carvings were made, thereby anchoring the rock carvings in older traditions and social memory. If the local elite could prove their ancestral right to the land by including the ritual activities connected with the rock carvings it would maintain the social hierarchy and legitimise their claim to power. Thus the rock carving locales become arenas for the meeting between time, tradition and the divine (Hygen and Bengtsson 1999: 61).

The Scandinavian rock carvings all seem to be connected to water and are situated in relation to settlements, pastures and arable lands. Liminal places seem to be a common factor and shorelines are important as they create a common ground for the meeting of the sky, earth and the sea (Helskog 1999). Also, there is a connection between the rock carvings and communication networks and routes in the landscape (Bengtsson 2004a; Borna-Ahlkvist 2002: 172–175; Sognnes 2001: 76).

Despite an overall common denominator, regional variations within Scandinavian rock art is evident and some symbols such as ships seem closely linked to water whereas others, like some of the geometric figures and wheel crosses, may have a more agricultural connection. Others again are clearly linked to death and burial, such as the hand symbol. Variations in the way symbols are carved and the frequency of some symbols over others are also factors that must be taken into consideration. It is important to remember that rock carvings have functioned in local societies and possessed local meaning within their local context. It is dangerous to generalise over wide areas and long time spans, and a carved stone should therefore always be interpreted in its local context when researching Bronze Age societies in Scandinavia (Gröhn 2004).

A rock with a view...

The Danish rock carving material outside Bornholm has previously been neglected, which is a pity, having now made a proven contribution to Danish Bronze Age research. Analyses have shown that the regional character is in some cases reflected in the choice of motif, but is also based on geological conditions. In the areas outside Bornholm rock carvings are made on chosen localities, often on larger stones, i.e. on erratic glacial boulders or previously erected megalithic tombs that already held significance in the landscape.

Rock carvings on megalithic tombs are situated prominently in the landscape in an open landscape context. These sites are seen as meeting places in relation to activities and rituals that involved larger groups of people – just as is seen on the outcrop sites on Bornholm (for example Madsebakke). Looking at these observations it is likely that the rock carving sites on megalithic tombs, burial mounds and rock outcrops represent public meeting places, with activities for larger assemblies. It is, however, worth distinguishing burial mounds from megalithic tombs and outcrop locales. Rock carvings found in burial mounds are part of a ritual that involves the burying of the dead. Thus the rock carvings in the burial context are sealed with the dead and this must have had some significance for their interpretation. Often in Zealand we find the hand symbol in graves and thus this symbol is clearly linked with burials and death.

The other groups of rock carving sites, namely megalithic tombs and outcrops, are believed to have served the purpose of public assembly places. These assemblies would not necessarily have involved the same functions or rituals as burial of the dead. The sites for carvings on megalithic tombs were chosen for their place of significance in areas without bedrock. In Bornholm there are a few examples of rock carvings on megalithic tombs, but here the outcrop locales dominate because these rocks were more suitable. I propose that both types of rock carving sites have served as assembly sites for large groups of people with political or ritual purpose. It is most likely that these meetings were used to maintain the power balance in society and to justify the claim to power by the local elite.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the rock carvings had multiple functions and we are operating with several types of rock carving sites that served particular purposes: burial mounds, outcrop sites, megalithic tombs and free-standing boulders. They were not all used for large gatherings or burials; some were used by individuals for worship and sacrifices. This would most likely have taken place by secluded rock carving sites which in the main part of Denmark are represented by the glacial boulders.

It has been demonstrated that these *in situ* glacial erratic boulders have a markedly different topographical setting than the other sites with rock carvings. They are most often situated on lower ground and in closed landscape settings with limited visibility to and from other rock carving sites. It is therefore suggested that they have played a different part in the social relations in Bronze Age society. They required a local knowledge of their placement and the landscape around them, and thus presumably functioned as holy places for local individuals or smaller groups.

The rock carvings played an important role in the Bronze Age and the motifs still convey stories we try to understand today. Rock art was part of the 'everyday' as well as being part of the religious and ritual sphere of Bronze Age society. But they should also be seen as above and 'outside' daily life, and thereby taking part in a dynamic relationship between the land, the people and the power (Hygen and Bengtsson 1999: 139). Rock carvings represented a reality for the Bronze Age people and this rock art was anchored in the everyday as well as the religious sphere of life. It is becoming more and more impossible to separate the sacred and profane, and instead we must realise that ritual acts are part of our everyday life, and thus our everyday life can be seen as having ritualised aspects (Cooney 1994: 33; Brück 1999). So, in addition to their religious character, the rock carvings also possessed practical meaning. The rock carvings in open spaces seem to have been part of the strategies of the social elite to maintain their claim to power, and the rock carving sites have been places for gatherings where rituals undoubtedly would have taken place, but they were also very practical places and political issues could have been discussed here and social relations maintained.

There are many ways of interpreting the meaning of rock art. In my work with the Danish rock art I have examined their social and geographical landscape relations as well as studying their immediate archaeological contexts. A natural next step for this research would be to contextualize more aspects of the Bronze Age society and integrate them with the study of the rock carvings. Studying an area where Bronze Age settlements have been excavated and can be seen in relation to nearby contemporary rock art would be ideal. Furthermore, there is the

need for more excavations and surveys, looking at the burial mounds and re-used megalithic tombs in relation to settlement patterns and activities in the Bronze Age. Signs of ritual activity and gatherings near these monuments should be seen in the light of the socio-political and cosmological order of Bronze Age society.

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Rock art and the alchemy of bronze. Metal and images in Early Bronze Age Scotland

Andrew Meirion Jones

In the late nineteenth century excavations revealed evidence for the depiction of Bronze Age metalwork in a cist burial in the Kilmartin region of Scotland. In the same region a further cist with similar evidence was revealed in the early years of the twentieth century. In contrast to the Scandinavian Bronze Age, these sites are some of the few with evidence for the depiction of metalwork in the British Bronze Age. This paper considers whether we should accept at face value the simple interpretation that these carvings represent axes. I will argue that these carvings are not portraits, images or symbols of axes, but that their significance is best understood as being related to the alchemical nature of metalworking in the earliest Bronze Age.

KEYWORDS: alchemy, assemblage, axes, 'axeness', effect, hoards, moulds

Two remarkable cists

In 1870, in a disused limekiln, a stone cist covered by a cairn was opened by local antiquarian Dean Mapleton on the Poltalloch Estate of the laird John Malcolm, part of what is now known as the Kilmartin Glen on the west coast of Scotland (Figs 7.1 and 7.2). The site of Ri Cruin occasioned much discussion as it featured several examples of what Mapleton (1870) describes as 'sculpturings'; the western end slab of the cist was embellished with what appears to be six, possibly eight, axe-shaped carvings (Fig. 7.3). In addition, part of the eastern slab was carved with an enigmatic design, which has both the appearance of a Scandinavian ship design or a pennanted halberd (Fig. 7.3). This has been the subject of much debate since, complicated in part because the original was removed from the site and destroyed in a fire in 1893 (Needham and Cowie 2012). The site was re-excavated by Gordon Childe in 1936 prior to public display and recognized as an Early Bronze Age cairn, part of a complex of such sites lying along the bottom of the

Kilmartin Glen (Fig. 7.2). Subsequent to Mapleton's excavations at Ri Cruin the nearby site of Nether Largie North revealed similar carvings of axes both on the side slab and upper slab (Fig. 7.4) of a cist beneath a cairn (Craw 1930). Neither of the cairns – Ri Cruin and Nether Largie North – exhibits much evidence for mortuary practices. On the description given by Mapleton, Ri Cruin probably contained a much decayed inhumation (Needham and Cowie 2012), while the Nether Largie cist contained a human molar tooth, some red ochre and a few fragments of charcoal (Craw 1930; RCAHMS 1999 [1988]: 32).

These carvings are situated in a landscape with the densest concentration of prehistoric rock art in the British Isles (Jones *et al.* 2011), but they are remarkable, as they comprise some of the few examples of representational images of metalwork in Britain.¹ Indeed there are a number of curious characteristics of these carvings; puzzlingly axes are rarely found in mortuary contexts (Needham 1988), so the appearance of numerous carved images of axes in evident mortuary cists is peculiar. In addition the location of the carved images on the west coast of Scotland is unusual as the sites lie on the opposite side of the country from the well-attested regions of metalwork production in northeast Scotland (Needham 2004; Cowie 1988). A number of commentators have noted that the Kilmartin Glen occupies an important inland route for the exchange of copper from the Irish copper mines of Ross Island and Mount Gabriel to the production centres of north-east Scotland (Cowie 1988; Jones 2001; Jones *et al.* 2011; Needham and Cowie 2012; Sheridan 2012) and have argued that this may offer a clue to the appearance of these carvings.



Fig. 7.1. The Kilmartin region, Scotland (image: Aaron Watson).

After the discovery at Ri Cruin the laird of the Estate, John Malcolm (the 14th Laird of Poltalloch) exhibited a cast and rubbings of the carvings at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries of London in June 1870. This was the occasion for much speculation as to their nature. In addition Mapleton (1870) invited similar speculation, and there appears to be general consistency in the interpretation that these were representations of copper or bronze axes: ‘portraits of bronze weapons, placed there instead of the real weapons...’ (Mapleton 1870: 380). One voice dissented from this interpretation, that of Col. Lane Fox (later General Pitt Rivers) who argued that these carvings were moulds. This interpretation was dismissed on the grounds that the carvings were too large for axe moulds. On current analysis we would describe these axe carvings as of Migdale, or possibly Killaha, type axes

(Needham and Cowie 2012) dating to c. 2100 to c. 1900 BC.

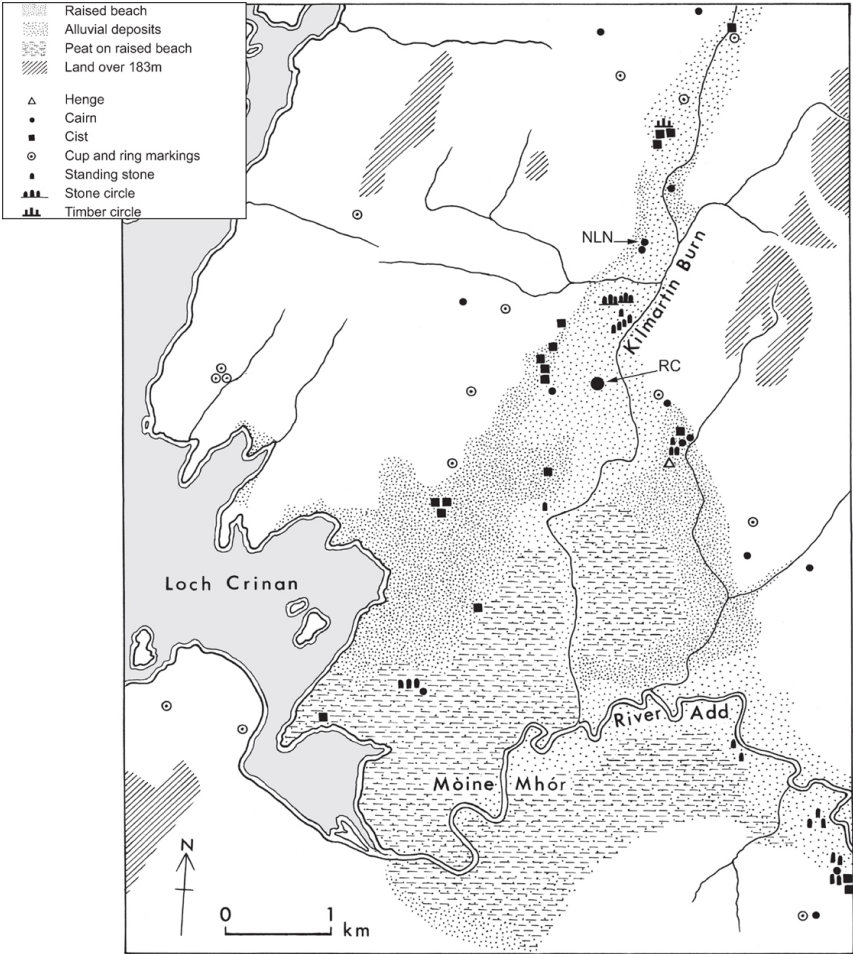


Fig. 7.2. Kilmartin Glen with position of Ri Cruin and Nether Largie North (image: courtesy of Stuart Needham and Trevor Cowie).

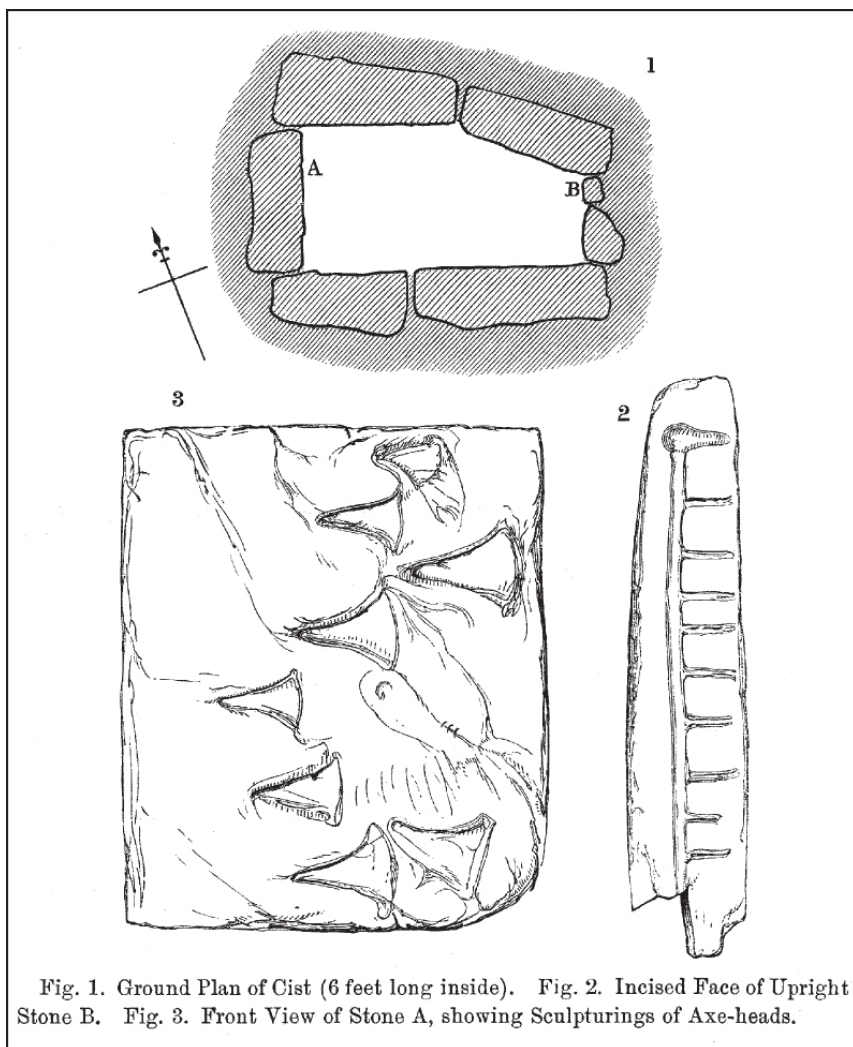


Fig. 1. Ground Plan of Cist (6 feet long inside). Fig. 2. Incised Face of Upright Stone B. Fig. 3. Front View of Stone A, showing Sculpturings of Axe-heads.

Fig. 7.3. Axe and halberd motifs at Ri Cruin Image: after Mapleton 1870).

In this paper I will consider whether we should accept the interpretation that these carvings represent axes at face value, and will ask whether Col. Lane Fox's initial suggestion that the carvings may be moulds was too readily dismissed. I will argue that these carvings are not portraits, images or symbols of axes, but that their significance is best understood as being related to the alchemical nature of metalworking in the earliest Bronze Age. I will examine this below.

The alchemy of metalwork

As Barbara Ottaway and Ben Roberts note, the alloying of tin bronzes may have

taken place in a number of diverse ways:

‘tin bronzes could have been made by mixing tin and copper oxide ores in a crucible or furnace, co-smelting copper sulphide with tin oxide ores, adding tin oxides to liquid copper or by smelting tin oxides to obtain metallic tin, and then adding this product to metallic *molten* copper under reducing conditions’. (Ottaway and Roberts 2008: 208; original emphasis).



Fig. 7.4. The decorated covering cist slab at Nether Largie north (photo: Andrew Jones).

Suffice to say that alloying involves multiple diverse ways of mixing metals or metal ores. In both alloying and recycling, individual materials are assembled to produce a new kind of object; these assemblages of matter produce an effect difficult to achieve from distinct components. I want to argue that the volatile nature of metal production, as illustrated by Roberts and Ottaway, is critical to our appreciation of all activities associated with metalwork during the Early Bronze Age, including the production of rock art. I introduce the concept of alchemy as this expresses a particular relationship to materials; a relationship characterised by experience and experiment in which the differing properties of materials are known more for what they *do*, rather than what they *are* (Elkins 2000). With the anthropologists Amiria Henare, Martin Holbraad and Sari Wastell (2007), and the archaeologist Chantal Conneller (2011), I argue that it is important that we appreciate the alchemical nature of materials, such as metals, and follow them in our analyses as their properties are manifested in differing ways.

The production and deposition of Migdale axes in northern Britain

I wish to explore this initially by considering the metalwork hoards, single finds and moulds of northern Britain before considering how this relates to the carvings discussed in the opening of this paper. At the outset it is important to highlight the way in which hoards are composed of assemblages of materials.

I will focus on the production and deposition of the flat axes of the Migdale period, dating from c. 2100 to c. 1900 BC. Early copper axes, as well as those of bronze of classic Migdale and near-Migdale type (see Needham 2004), are included in the discussion. This account draws on the catalogue of finds produced by Burgess and Schmidt (1981).



Fig. 7.5. Early Bronze Age axe mould of stone from Foudland Hill, Inch, Aberdeenshire, Scotland (photo: courtesy of Marischall College Museum, Aberdeen).

There are 282 axes in total in northern Britain (figure derived from Burgess and Schmidt 1981, including all copper axes, types Dunnottar, Biggar, Nairn and Migdale, plus unclassified axes). Of these, only 7% (20 of 282) are decorated. Most axes are deposited as single finds, although there are several hoards consisting of between two axes (e.g. Durris) and up to seven axes (Colleonard Farm; Hill of Finglenny). Most hoards appear to consist of axes only, although some hoards include a mixture of artefacts, such as the Sluie hoard containing two axes, one halberd and one armring, or the Migdale hoard which contains a mixture of metalwork and other artefacts including one axe, six cast armrings, two strip armlets, nine tabular beads, two possible earrings and nine jet buttons or cones (Piggott and Stewart 1958). We also find hoards of other multiple metal artefacts, such as the hoard of four copper halberds from Auchingoul.

Assemblages and production

Burgess and Schmidt (1981: 55) bemoan the fact that hoards consist of multiple types of the same artefact, affording them little typo-chronological value. However it is precisely because hoards consist of multiple repetitive artefacts that make them significant, as they compose a distinctive kind of repetitive assemblage.

To understand the significance of repetitive assemblages of metal artefacts we need to consider production. There is good evidence for the production of flat axes from open moulds in northern Britain, with a particular concentration of moulds around the Buchan region of Aberdeenshire (Needham 2004; Burgess and Schmidt 1981). These open moulds consist of a conveniently shaped piece of rock, usually of sandstone (Fig. 7.5). Some moulds have been shaped to facilitate handling. The moulds predominantly consist of matrices for the production of flat axes but also sometimes for bars, armrings and knives. Moulds may have several matrices on one face. There is good evidence that the moulds were used, with signs of blackening from heat and traces of metal (Burgess and Schmidt 1981: 52).

Needham (2004: 223) points out that, as moulds are single-valve – the other half of the mould being completed by a flat stone – the finished product was likely to have been asymmetrical; axe matrices were carved so as to approximate the desired form of the finished axe. Once the axe was produced from the mould it would then be finished, and the castings produced by these moulds would have required extensive forging to achieve the pointed oval section of Migdale axes. This finishing procedure would also include – in rare instances – decoration. Decoration was relatively restricted, the most common form being ‘raindrop’ motifs, or variants of chevron motifs. A discussion of moulds is introduced here as the production of artefacts from moulds enables the craftsperson to produce multiple artefacts of the same type.

Moulds are therefore powerful technologies, as through repetitive performances – the repeated production of an axe from bronze – a series of copies are created which are related. In this sense, moulds provide the conditions of possibility by which assemblages can be formed, and by which the similarities and differences between artefacts can be articulated. It is particularly significant then that, in John Coles’ (1968; 1970) analysis of Migdale axes, 50 could be attributed to 11 Scottish moulds. If this is the case then around a fifth of the axes in northern Britain can be grouped together as having had a common reference point. In addition, Burgess and Schmidt (1981: 52) argue that the axes from Bracobrae, Perthshire in central Scotland and Drumdoch, Wigtown, Dumfries and Galloway in southwestern Scotland were produced from the same mould. These axes, deposited and circulated at either end of Scotland, will also have had a common source, forming an *extended assemblage*.

The technology of the mould is of signal importance as it forms the source of an artefact’s biography, and is one way in which distinct artefacts may have been related, as having come from a common source. Given this emphasis on commonality it seems unsurprising that the axe hoards of this region largely consist of assemblages of multiple, similar, artefacts. In this light, the secondary decoration of axes takes on greater significance, as decoration is an act that differentiates axes from one another.



Fig. 7.6. The hoard of bronze axes from Colleopard Farm, Aberdeenshire (photo: courtesy of the National Museum of Scotland).

Assemblages and deposition

Arguably, hoards from this region have a performative character. I will begin by discussing the performances associated with the hoard from Colleopard Farm (Fig. 7.6). The hoard consists of seven axes, three of these are decorated with 'raindrop' motifs, another three of the axes have a distinctive ridged surface pattern and may have been derived from the same mould (one of these has lost both the blade and the butt). The last, and smallest, axe is plain. The Colleopard Farm hoard is a coherent, repetitive assemblage, however there are also factors that differentiate the hoard, and the axes might be considered to consist of three distinct groups of 'raindrop' motif, ridged surface pattern and plain; significantly the plain axe is also distinguished from the rest of the hoard by size. The composition of the hoard performs a sense of repetition and difference. This performance is heightened by the fact that the axes were deposited, blades uppermost, in a Food Vessel pot, enacting or referencing contemporary burial practices.

The differentiation of axes by size is also evident in the hoard at The Maidens, Ayrshire, which consists of five axes, two of which are markedly smaller than the rest. Again this hoard performs coherence and repetition as well as differentiation. A sense of performance can also be witnessed by the hoard deposited at the Hill of Finglenny, comprising seven axes. These axes appear undifferentiated in terms of size and decoration, all being plain. However, three of the axes have been broken midway across, a dramatic act that presumably took place immediately prior to deposition, as the axes are otherwise complete. The axes at Finglenny were also coated in a thin layer of tin, giving them a distinctive and memorable appearance.

Many of the axes in the three hoards mentioned above show signs of wear, and we should remember the curation practices involved in forming these hoard assemblages, while some of these axes may have been produced from the same moulds they need not have been used together, and might have been widely circulated. It is possible that some of these hoards were gathered over a number of

years. However the performance of deposition in hoards allows individual metal artefacts to be reunited or reassembled.

Deposition of hoards took place in a variety of settings, occasionally in close proximity to monuments; the Hill of Finglenny hoard overlooked the henge at Wormy Hillock and the Migdale hoard overlooked the henge of the same name (Cowie 2004; Bradley 2011). Trevor Cowie (2004) has also drawn attention to a series of hoards deposited in spectacular mountain-top or mountain-slope settings, including the sites at Dunaspie Crag, Edinburgh – part of the suite of geological features associated with Arthur's Seat in the Scottish Capital – with a deposit of three axes; Kinloch Rannoch, Perthshire where a hoard of four axes was discovered in a hollow on a fluvio-glacial terrace; the Pass of Ballater, Aberdeenshire a spectacular mountain pass where two axes were deposited; the Port Murray, Ayrshire hoard was deposited c. 150m from a prominent standing stone overlooking the findspot (Cowie 2004: 260); the Dail na Caraidh, Invernesshire hoard was deposited next to a large axe-shaped glacial mound (Barrett and Gourlay 1999). The depositional context of many of these hoards is intimate, e.g. the Kinloch Rannoch hoard was wedged into a small cleft in the rock. Yet these deposits also evidently draw on the wider landscape. These hoards work at a series of scales, performing a sense of intimacy whilst also drawing on the wider landscape. Strikingly – given the generally low numbers of decorated axes – the majority of the axes deposited in these settings are decorated (Cowie 2004). The axes comprise a coherent, repetitive assemblage while also being marked out as unusual. The assemblage of these hoards draws on the internal coherence of the metalwork of which the hoard is composed, while also forming a dynamic relationship with the wider landscape.

What do these axe hoards tell us about performance and assemblage? I argued above that the appearance of open mould technologies was important as the moulds act as reference points for the generation of similar axes produced from the same mould; secondary working and decoration subsequently differentiate the axes. Because of their common origins it is possible to consider the wider group of Migdale type axes as part of a larger *extended assemblage*, related by commonality. Even when metal artefacts are deposited as single finds their commonality means that they are components in a wider assemblage of artefacts.

However, when groups of similar artefacts are deposited together their points of similarity produce a *repetitive assemblage*; the significance of the individual constituents is magnified by repetition. It is this magnification that is important here, as through repetition the properties and qualities of axes are exaggerated and emphasized. It is not so much groups of axes that are being deposited but the effect of axes; their properties and capabilities. Repetition emphasizes the 'axeness' of the groups of axes deposited.

Return to Kilmartin

Having examined aspects of the Early Bronze Age metalwork hoards of Scotland and northern Britain we are now in a position to reconsider the axe carvings at Ri Cruin and Nether Largie North discussed at the beginning of this paper. I highlighted a series of components of these hoards noting the way in which hoards were performed, the significance of repetition and the significance of their location

in the landscape. Most important, I emphasized that the circulation of axes around northern Britain enacted the processes of assemblage and mixture that are characteristic of metalworking itself. In addition, the importance of the stone mould was foregrounded as a critical point of reference.

Axe carvings as performances

Size differentiation was a key characteristic in the performance of hoard deposition. This too can be observed when we look at the axe carvings in Kilmartin. Notably the side slab at Nether Largie North juxtaposes an enlarged axe and a small axe, with size differences of some 19.5 cm. Interestingly on the cover slab at Nether Largie North and on the Ri Cruin side slab there is more uniformity in size, and in each case only one axe in each group is significantly larger than its fellows. Size appears to be significant, both as a means of performing similarity and difference, and of emphasising the qualities of the axes.

One of the other key characteristics of these carvings is the number of axes carved on each rock surface. Repetition was notably significant amongst the hoards. Evidently there is a degree of repetition amongst the carvings, given the number of images. Did the carving occur on a single occasion or over a period of time? This question can be answered by considering the architecture of the sites. The Kilmartin region is characterised by a peculiar form of stone cist (rebated cists) with slabs with grooved and battered edges that neatly fit together. I have previously argued that one of the consequences of this is that the cists could have been freestanding (Jones 2001), and were likely to have been open monuments for some time prior to being covered by cairns of stone. Notably the re-assessment of Greenwell's excavation at the nearby Glebe cairn by the Royal Commission ([1988] 1999: 28–29) suggests a two phase construction with an earlier phase represented by a boulder ring and slab-built cist, and a later phase with a further boulder-built cist and cairn enlargement.

The evidence from associated rock art supports the argument for phases of elaboration, with the best example being the cover slab at Nether Largie North. Bradley (1993: 91–93) discerns four phases of carving on this slab, though given the complexity of the carved surface there is the potential for many more episodes of carving. Interestingly, Needham and Cowie's recent re-assessment of the carved ship/halberd pillar at Ri Cruin argues that the image is indeed of a halberd carved during the Early Bronze Age over an earlier abstract Neolithic carving (Needham and Cowie 2012); a process suggesting re-use and repetition. It would appear from these two strands of evidence then that not only are the carvings at Ri Cruin and Nether Largie North repetitious in the sense of repeated carvings forming the visual assemblage, but that their performance is repetitious over time. As with hoards repetition emphasizes the qualities and properties of the axes, and exaggerations in scale draw attention to this in a visually powerful fashion. The 'axeness' of the axe is emphasized by these exaggerations.

For the hoard deposits discussed above landscape location was a significant component of the process of assemblage. This is true of the axe carvings at Ri Cruin and Nether Largie North. I have previously argued (Jones 2006; Jones *et al.* 2011) that the stones on which the axes are carved have lengthy biographies, and were previously standing stones that have been dismantled and broken up during

the Early Bronze Age. Additionally the sites are located in a region with the greatest concentration of rock art in Britain, and are components of an extensive linear cairn cemetery that stretches for some four miles along the length of the Kilmartin Glen. All this suggests that the landscape location is an important factor, and the act of carving references the significant landscape.

I outlined the performative dimensions of the axe carvings by examining the issues of size differentiation, repetition and landscape location. However there is one performance that I have not yet discussed: the act of carving. Each of the axes at Ri Cruin and Nether Largie North is pecked into stone by a process that mirrors that of carving axe moulds (Jones 2001: 224). In this sense, Col. Lane Fox's suggestion in 1870 that the carvings resembled moulds was quite correct. However, his analogy falls short of the mark when we consider that the carvings are not of moulds, but of finished axes with flared blades. In addition, the carved axes are much larger than their counterparts in copper or bronze. However interestingly, a number of the carved slabs are organized in a similar fashion to moulds, with axe carvings being haphazardly carved on the stone as at the upper slab of Nether Large North, or squeezed together on the stone as occurs at Ri Cruin and the side slab at Nether Largie North. Notably the carving of axes differs substantially from earlier processes of carving where far more attention was paid to the texture of the rock surface (Jones *et al.* 2011). The carvings are similar in kind to those of moulds, yet the shapes they outline are those of finished axes. This seems paradoxical if we assume these are simply representations. However if we instead argue that the carvings are capturing the properties and qualities of axes, their 'axeness', then the fact that they are both carved like moulds but in the form of finished axes seems perfectly comprehensible, as each of these aspects embodies the properties of Early Bronze Age flat axes, their production and forging.

The carvings are paradoxical then, much like contemporary hoard deposits the carvings perform size differences, they are repetitious in number and over time, and resonate with their surrounding landscape. Most importantly, the process of carving is similar to that of producing moulds. It is important that their paradoxical nature is appreciated as it helps us understand the ontological nature of the carvings. I will consider this point below.

The ontology of the image in Early Bronze Age Scotland

The notion that images act as representations is both customary and reassuring. It has been a component of our fabric of thought since Classical Greek sculptural portraiture, and was elaborated by the allegorical images of Renaissance Italy (Baxandall 1972) and firmly cemented in the descriptive arts of the seventeenth century Dutch Republic (Alpers 1983). However, as art historians and visual culture scholars remind us, comprehending representational imagery involves a particular way of seeing (e.g. Mitchell 2005); it also involves a particular ontology. To perceive images as forms of representation assumes a specific ontological outlook.

What do we mean if we consider the world to consist of representations? We assume that humans have a common capacity to reflect their experiences imaginatively as symbolic representations. Representations, by this account, are expressions of the imaginative capacity of humans visually projected onto a

passive material medium (Bolt 2004). In this account people appear to be able to step outside of the current of daily life in order to reflect their experiences as visual symbols. In such models of representation the material world – as distinct from humans – appears to play little role in the process of representation. Materials appear transparent here; they simply serve as the substrate upon which representations are overlaid (see e.g. Bennett 2010; Coole and Frost 2010). This material substrate is imagined as a stable and unchanging entity awaiting the action of thoughtful human subjects. At the beginning of this paper I argued for an alchemical understanding of materials, a perspective that focuses on the properties of materials and examines what materials are capable of (Conneller 2011), rather than assuming that materials are inert substances.

I think we need to be cautious in assuming that all images act as representations, as this overlooks the important role played by the materials out of which images are carved. Rather than assuming that people in Bronze Age Scotland shared the same Euro-American ontology as us I want to think differently about the ontological nature of the axe carvings that have been the subject of this paper.

My discussion of contemporary metal production and hoards established the importance of the axe mould as a common point of reference in making multiple metal artefacts, while hoards were argued to circulate from these moulds as extended and repetitive assemblages. My discussion of axe carvings established that many of the characteristics of hoards were performed in the carvings, including differentiations of size, repetition of image and relationship to landscape. Also it was noted that the act of carving and the organization of carving on the stone slabs at Ri Cruin and Nether Largie North resembled the process of mould production; both involving pecking into the surface of stone and fitting carvings into the available space on the stone. On this basis it could be argued that the axe carvings less resemble or represent axes, as enact the production and properties of axes. Rather than thinking of the axe carvings as symbolic representations, a process in which metaphorical links are made between the physical and the imagined, I instead argue that the axe carvings are best seen as *relational transformations* in which equivalences are established on the basis of physically similar properties. It is the effect of axes, their properties and qualities, their ‘axeness’ that is important. As noted by Mapleton (1870) the axe carvings are substitutions. But these substitutions are not symbolic they are relational.

I began this paper by pointing out that bronze is a complex substance that is produced through a variety of processes of mixture and assemblage. Metals are volatile substances that are produced from mixtures, but the properties of metals are also changeable; metals can flow, cool and harden. The properties of metal artefacts also change as they are worked and heated though they are still composed of the same substance.

Just as metals are substantially connected, though their properties alter, so the carvings act as a relational connection to metals. The axe carvings embody and articulate some of the properties and processes of contemporary metalworking, the carvings recall the moulds from which bronze axes are produced, yet what is produced through the act of carving are substitutes of finished axes, not the metal forms usually produced from the carving of moulds and from which axes are subsequently made. The making of the axe carvings also articulate other practices associated with hoard deposition and metal circulation, such as assemblage and

repetition. Interestingly we can compare the axe carvings with axe moulds where the process of carving produces the conditions for fixing volatile metal into a hardened form, the axe carvings produce the conditions for manifesting and visualizing the physical qualities of metalwork: their 'axeness'. We might therefore characterize the act of carving axes as a process of experimentation akin to the experimentation involved in metalworking.

The conclusion of the experiment

We can consider the axe carvings as 'moments' in a process of experimentation associated with Early Bronze Age metalworking. They occupy a geographical 'moment', and may be associated with the movement of Irish copper and bronze artefacts across the Irish Sea. Needham and Cowie (2012) argue that the axes represent large axes of Irish Killaha type, which would suggest they are associated with the earliest movement of bronze artefacts from Ireland. Having said this, recent mould finds from Easter Clunie, eastern Scotland suggest that enlarged axes closer to the size of Killaha axes were also potentially being produced in Scotland (Cowie and O'Connor 2009: 324). Equally, we need not view the axe carvings as literal representations of Killaha axes so much as an attempt to capture some of the physical properties of the axe in stone.

The carvings also occupy a chronological 'moment', being produced at the very beginning of the insular Bronze Age. As noted above, contemporary metalworking was experimental in nature, involving the mixing and assemblage of various substances. The axe carvings resonate with metalworking practices, with similarities to mould manufacture, and the carvings are performed in similar ways to hoard depositions. They are not direct representations carved into a stony substrate, rather the physical qualities of stone participate in the production of axes; part of the alchemical process of forming a metal axe from solid stone. If we think of early metalworking as a process of alchemical assemblage in which new substances were produced from a mixture of other substances we might think of the axe carvings as an attempt to 'fix' or capture the physical properties and processes of metalwork and metalworking; a process in which the process of carving and the physical properties of stone cohere to form an axe.

As noted at the beginning of this paper the axe carvings at Kilmartin are unusual, and form a select group of such carvings in Early Bronze Age Britain. As components of the earliest experimental phase of metalworking we might characterize them as a failure; part of the early attempt to comprehend and 'play' with the possibilities of form by processes of transformation. As Ingold and Hallam (2007: 1) note, 'there is no script for social and cultural life. People have to work it out as they go along. In a word, they have to improvise'. The axe carvings at Ri Cruin and Nether Largie North are an example of such a process of improvisational experimentation, in which the act of carving in stone (a tradition with a long history) was improvised to capture the properties of the new substance (metal) that was flowing through the landscape. The axe carvings were an attempt at 'keeping while giving', at fixing the forms and properties of axes, their solidity, shininess and fluidity, their 'axeness', whilst letting their metal substitutes be exchanged into eastern Scotland.

Evidently these experiments in resemblance and transformation, in capturing

properties and effects, did not ‘stick’ and were soon abandoned, as recent dates for rock art in the region suggest a Late Bronze Age revival of abstract imagery in rock art (Jones *et al.* 2011). Indeed in the British Isles as a whole these early experiments were abandoned until the Late Bronze Age, some eight hundred years later.

Note

- 1 Other sites with evidence for representational images of metalwork include Stonehenge, Wiltshire (Cleal *et al.* 1995) and Badbury, Dorset (Piggott 1939); both sites have images of axes and daggers. See also Abbott and Anderson-Whymark (2012) for a discussion of the Stonehenge carvings in the light of recent laser scans.

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The ‘Stranger King’ (bull) and rock art

Johan Ling and Michael Rowlands

In this paper we will argue that Bronze Age rock art could be seen as a fusion of the following social processes: (1) A legacy of the North Scandinavian Rock Art Tradition in terms of the emphasis of animistic feature and the general need to aggregate or interact on a seasonal basis; (2) southern Scandinavia’s entanglement in metals during the Bronze Age which, in fact, triggered the entire process of creating rock art during this epoch; and as an outcome of this process (3) the formation of new maritime institutions and a general need to (4) enter and maintain ‘international’ networks and alliances that inspired the rock art tradition with a pan-European code of warriorhood and cosmology. Of particular interest for us here is the ritual and transformative depictions of bulls and ships in the former ‘seascape’ of Bohuslän.

KEYWORDS: animistic transformations, cosmopolitical codes, entanglement in metals, ‘Stranger King’, maritime institutions

Introduction

Visiting the rock art in Bohuslän, western Sweden (Fig. 8.1), often leaves you with more questions than answers and every occasion leads to new perspectives or ideas. This has to do with the nature of the rock art itself, fixed figuratives in the rocks performed in a varied, innovative way constantly inviting new interpretations and ideas (e.g. Raphael 1945). At present, there are about 1500 sites with figuratives in Bohuslän, and new sites are found every year (Toreld this volume). Even if new sites and images are found, there are lots of discoveries, or rather interpretations, to be explored with regard to the known sites. Many interesting ideas and suggestions are proposed by visiting researchers, often with no direct experience or previous familiarity with rock art, as was the case when I brought Mike Rowlands to visit some sites in northern Bohuslän.

The region of Bohuslän is home to one of Europe’s largest concentrations of

Bronze Age rock art and no other area in Scandinavia presents such a rich figurative repertoire and complex compositions of images from the Bronze Age. There are plenty of figuratives and among the repertoire we find representations of bulls (Fig. 8.2). They occur mostly on panels with ships from Early Bronze Age period 1, 1700–1500 BC (cf Vandkilde 1996), and *were depicted in close association with the ships*.

However, not much attention has been paid to these representations and the most common interpretation is that they convey the pastoral livelihood in Tanum during the Bronze Age (Bertilsson 1987; Vogt 2012). In fact, this idea fits with the pollen record which indicates that cattle breeding was of importance in Tanum during the Bronze Age (Ling 2008: 6). However, in terms of the location, combination and display we argue that these particular images convey a more delicate ritual narrative and more specifically a transformative narrative rooted in the North Scandinavian Rock Art Tradition (NT) (cf. Sognnes 2001). In the NT tradition we find many examples of animistic transformation of forms of the wild into ‘human’ forms (Sognnes 2001; Gjerde 2010). Thus it ‘is the idea of taking the outside in’ that links the wild to the cultural which includes both animal and non-animal transformations. The idea of taking the outside in could also be seen as a feature in the Bronze Age associated with rock art, ships, metals and notions of violence.

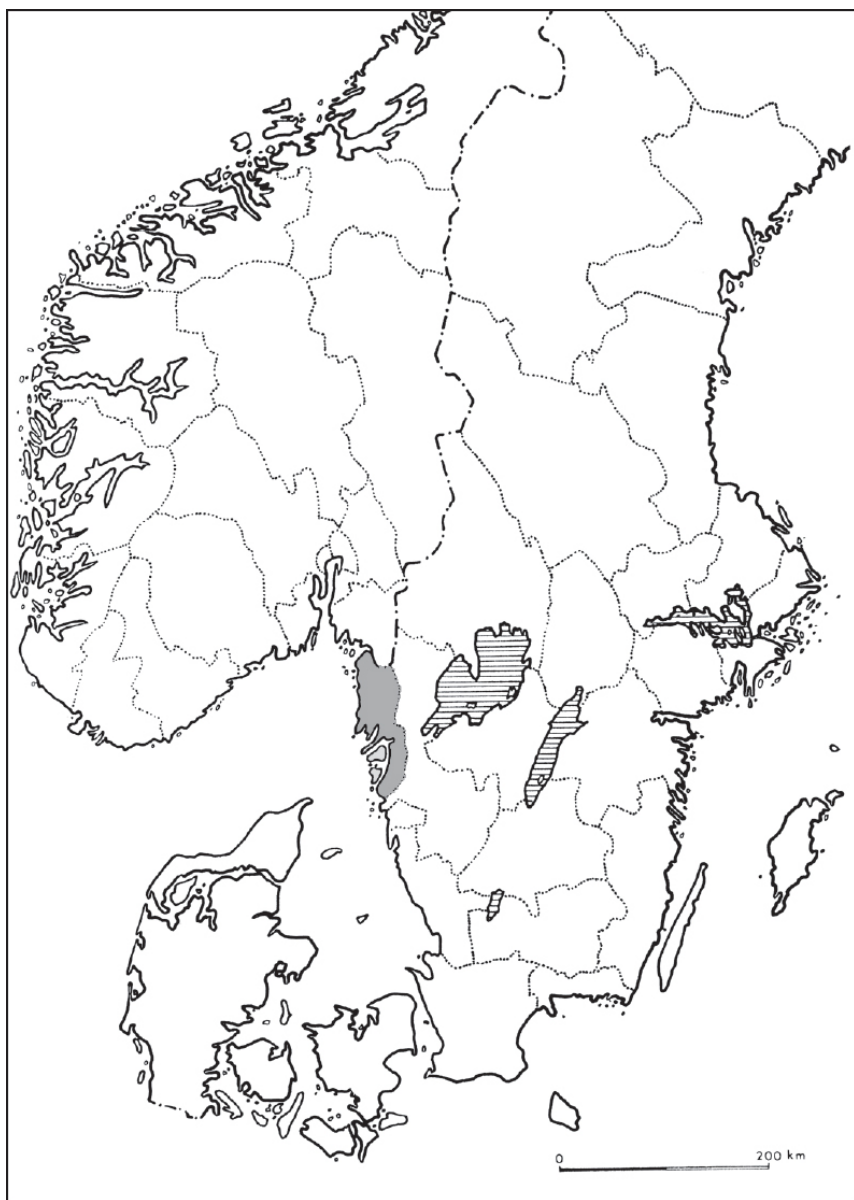


Fig. 8.1. Parts of Scandinavia with the rock art region of Bohuslän marked in grey.

There are many forms that the wild did take in the Bronze Age depending on the nature of the origin. For instance, the animate-/non-animate transition, stone in many forms, metals and amber, all derive from natural sources, and their movement or transformation is essentially a change from a raw state into a domesticated 'cultural' form. It is in this latter sense that we are particularly

interested in using Sahlins' argument about the *Stranger King*, which in this case is limited to the warrior figure on the rocks, to discuss the potency of the wild as a means of empowering local cultural forms. Furthermore, we will also argue that the rock art phenomenon in Southern Scandinavia should be seen in the light of Scandinavia's 'entanglement' in metals during the Bronze Age.

Bulls, ships and seascapes in northern Bohuslän

In the areas of Tanum, Kville, Svenneby and Bottna, bull depictions often occur on rock art panels with ship depictions from the Early Bronze Age (Fredsjö 1981; Ling 2008) (Fig. 8.2). However, there is not enough room to describe all these sites in detail and we have therefore confined our study to a couple of sites in the Tanum area.

According to the most recent shore displacement study in the area, the altitude of the shoreline at the beginning of the Bronze Age should be approximately 16–17 m a.s.l., with a descent to 10–11 m a.s.l. towards the end of the Bronze Age (Ling 2008). This implies that most of the panels mentioned above faced a seascape during the Bronze Age (Fig. 8.3). Thus, the maritime realm seems to have attracted groups to make ships, bulls and other images on the shore during the Bronze Age.

Our brief case study starts at the site Tanum 12 located at Aspeberget. This hill has 20 rock art panels, most of them on the eastern slope close to the Tanum River. The current site is located about 19 m a.s.l. and it faced the seascape during the entire Bronze Age. The site is much cited in the literature not least for the warriors depicted on the lower part, the vertical row of ships in the middle and the famous sun symbol at the very top of the panel (Fig. 8.4) (cf. Montelius 1876; Almgren 1927; Bertilsson 1987; Fredell 2003). However, what caught our attention here are the representations of bulls in the higher portion of the panel. There is a very pragmatic interpretation of this scene at hand, claiming that it shows a cattle theft (Montelius 1876). However, we think the message is more subtle than this suggestion. There is a scene, or rather a succession of a human and bulls in different sizes; the closer to the ship the larger becomes the bull, as if the bull grows to its full size and then transforms into a ship (Fig. 8.4). The ship has features that are characteristic of the Early Bronze Age, such as in-turned prows and a slightly raised keel extension, and the appearance of all the images indicates a dating to the Early Bronze Age. In fact, the in-turned prows could be seen as yet another device that connects the ship with the bulls, i.e. in terms of the shape of the horns. Beneath the ship there is an additional bull, and beneath this a ship and a bull. The entire composition made up of ships and bulls, and the sequence with growing and moving bulls that seemingly enter or transform into ships, is indeed interesting.

The transformative features between ships and bulls here seem to elaborate on the theme 'taking the outside in'.

The second panel, Tanum 25, is located on the same hill, about 300 m south of the previously mentioned one, and also includes some interesting features with ships and bulls (Figs 8.2 and 8.5). This panel also faced the seascape during the Bronze Age. Nevertheless, the lower part of the panel displays a cluster of ships, humans and bulls of particular interest. The most striking feature here is the bull on the lowest position with a ship-shaped body, indeed similar to the shape of the

ship depicted to the right. Above the bull is a human scene showing ‘males’ with erect penises in a moving sequence. Thus a ‘herd’ of ships and bulls seem to surround the human scene as if they were a slightly different species, yet from the same herd and with the same intent, which may have been to protect or ensure the social initiation rite (Fig. 8.2). Finally, at the panel above this, there are some magnificent ships, also from the Early Bronze Age, surrounding or supporting a large ship with in-turned prows. There is a small bull with large horn hanging at the very end of the keel extension of the large ship (Fig. 8.5). Thus, once again we see the close connection between the bull and the ships on the rocks, or rather the narrative of the transformation of these particular features.



Fig. 8.2. Bulls and ship depictions from the Tanum and Kville areas in western Sweden. Top left: Tanum 12 after Claesson Claes (source: SHFA); Top right: Tanum 25 after Evers Dietrich (source: SHFA); Bottom left: Tanum 351; and Bottom right: Kville 159 (documentation by Tanums hällristningsmuseum Underslås (THU); source: SHFA).

Our last ‘empirical’ example is taken from the so-called Gerum panel. It is located about 1 km south-east of Aspeberget, and is one of the most outstanding rock art panels in the Tanum area. The low ‘maritime’ position of this panel, 14.5–16.5 m a.s.l, is unusual, and it presents a perfect case for shoreline dating (Ling 2008).

It includes some remarkable figures and combinations, such as the scene with horned warriors attached to a pole, which they are hanging onto or entering, and several interconnected animals as well as an extremely large bulllike figure (Fig. 8.6). The former scene is the most cited one and has traditionally been regarded as a maypole (Almgren 1927; cf. Fredell 2003; Skoglund 2012). However, the

maritime setting and the fact that the panel is dominated by ship depictions suggest rather that this scene represents a maritime initiation rite (Ling 2008: 139). The most striking feature on this panel is the large bull found in the top right. It is accompanied by another bull and surrounded by a fleet of ships. The bodies of both bulls follows the shape of a ship hull. This fact is most obvious on the large bull with vertical representations of possible rows of cleats for fastening lashings to stabilise the hull of the 'bullboat'. In fact, the whole scene with ships with in-turned prows/horns and bulls could be seen as a herd/fleet on the move, staged for a special maritime event (Fig. 8.6).

What we shall keep in mind is that the ship may have been regarded as a fragile feature during the Bronze Age, and fixing it into the firm and permanent rock and depicting it alongside strong features or symbols such as the bull, could have ensured the durability and safety of the journey of the ship. In the opposite part of the panel there is a ship from the Early Bronze Age with a bull just beneath, as if the bull lifts or carries the ship over dangerous waters (Fig. 8.6).

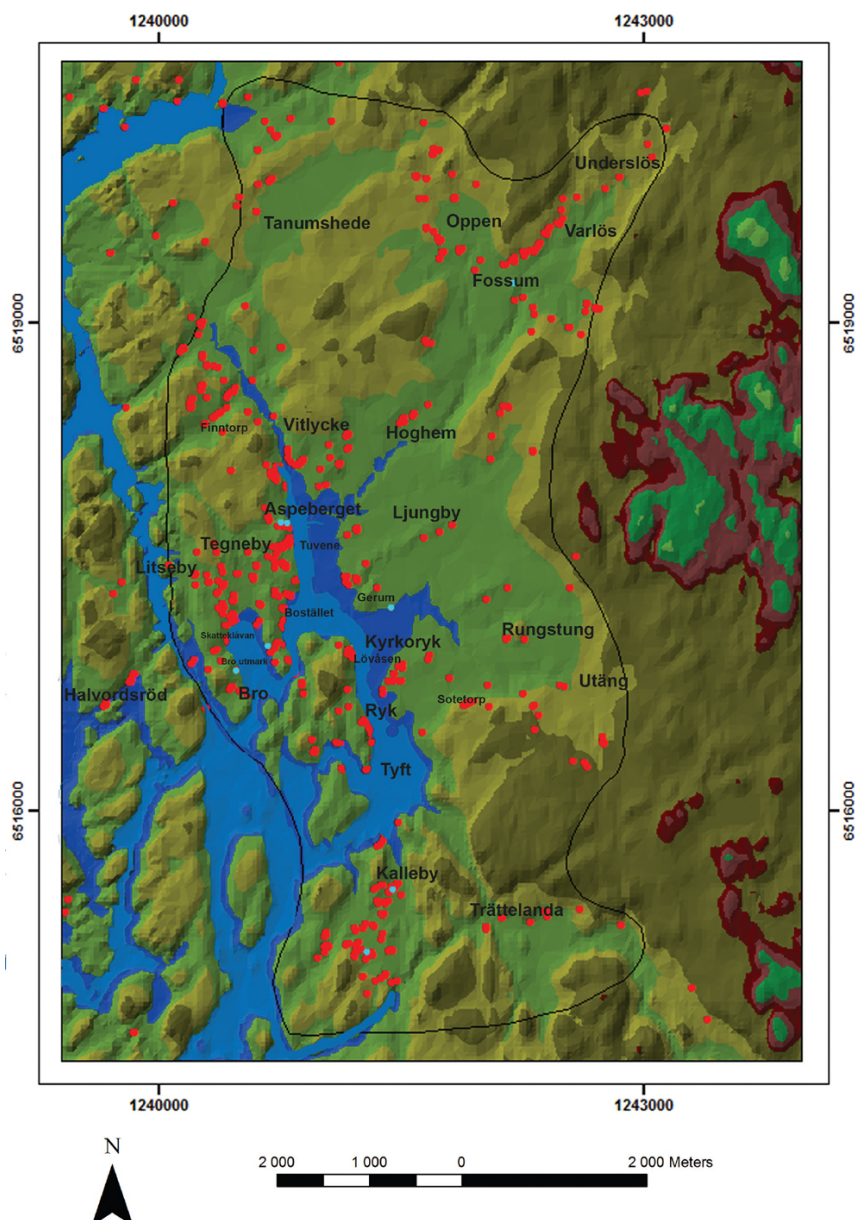


Fig. 8.3. The distribution of rock art in the landscape of Tanum during the Bronze Age, with a sea level about 15 m a.s.l.

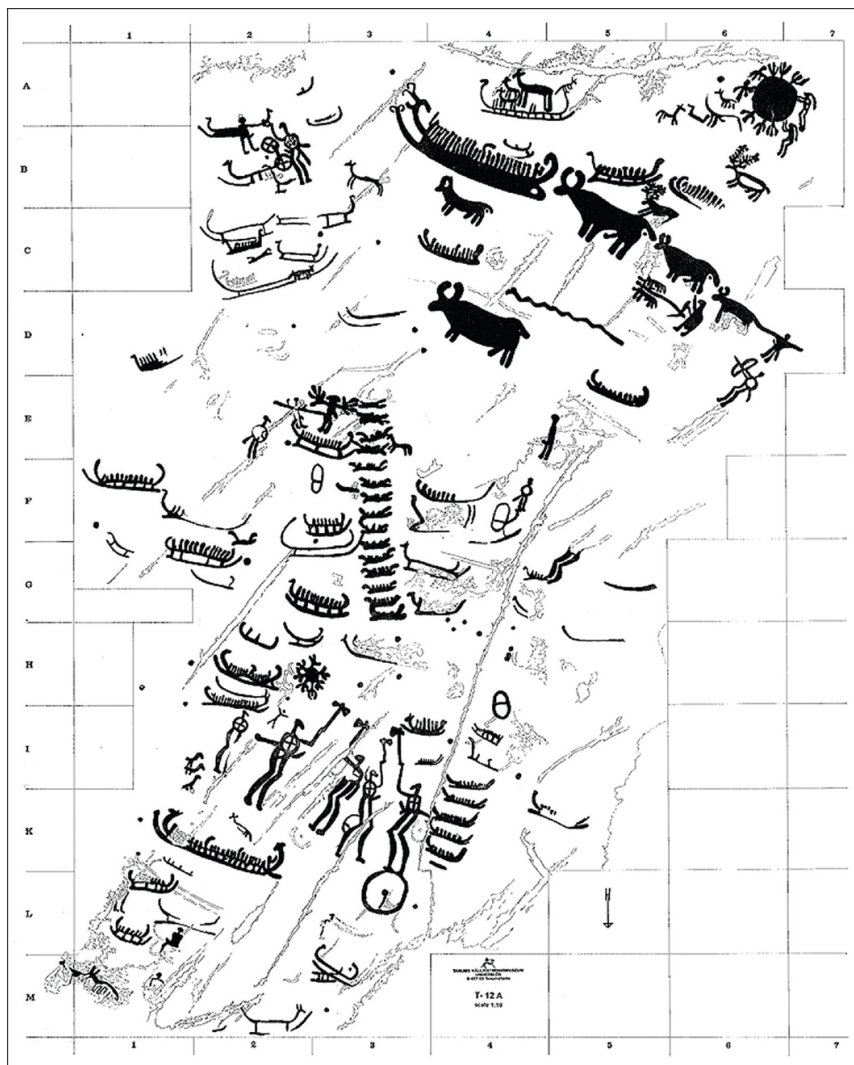


Fig. 8.4. The magnificent panel Tanum 12, displaying transformative features between ships and bulls (documentation by Tanums hällristningsmuseum Underslöv (THU); source: SHFA).



Fig. 8.5. The upper part of the panel Tanum 25, displaying a large ship from the Early Bronze Age with a bull attached to the keel extension (photo: Otnes Wilhelm, Tanums hällristningsmuseum Underslös (THU); source: SHFA).

Finally, another important observation for our argument is the fact that some panels with typical Early Bronze Age features include depictions of bulls that seem to emanate from the cracks in the rocks. These bulls are never completely depicted, only half of the animal is ever displayed (Tanum 304; 262), and it is as if the rock deliberately holds the other part of the beast. This feature could be seen as yet another example of the potency of the rock, and as an extension of the transformation between stone/animal and ship.

Structure from the north, content from the south

In this section we will argue that the transformative depictions of bulls and ships should be seen as a legacy (structure) of the northern rock art tradition while the bull image itself (content) may have been an inflow from southern Europe.

Transformations between animals (elk, reindeer and seals) and ships are a common theme for the NT tradition (Fig. 8.7). It is therefore logical to assume that this animistic theme was a legacy of the NT tradition (cf. Westerdahl 2005) and today, most scholars agree that the structure of making rock art ‘as format’ was transmitted from the north to the south (Helskog 1999; Sognnes 2001; Bradley 2006; Goldhahn 2010; Cornell and Ling 2010; Gjerde 2010). This format seems to have been transmitted to southern Scandinavia during the Early Bronze Age where it evidently developed in a quite different way (Helskog 1999; Goldhahn and Ling 2013). Other impacts from the north to south have also been stressed, for instance Bradley argues that the vertical cosmological conception of the world during the Bronze Age was transmitted from the NT tradition (Bradley 2000; see also this volume). Another important feature that needs to be stressed regarding the NT

rock art is that it is thought to have been produced in accordance with seasonal socio-ritual gatherings. These meetings took place when there was a seasonal abundance of prey animals at these specific locations in the landscape such as at Nämforsen or Alta (Helskog 1999; Goldhahn 2002; Gjerde 2010).

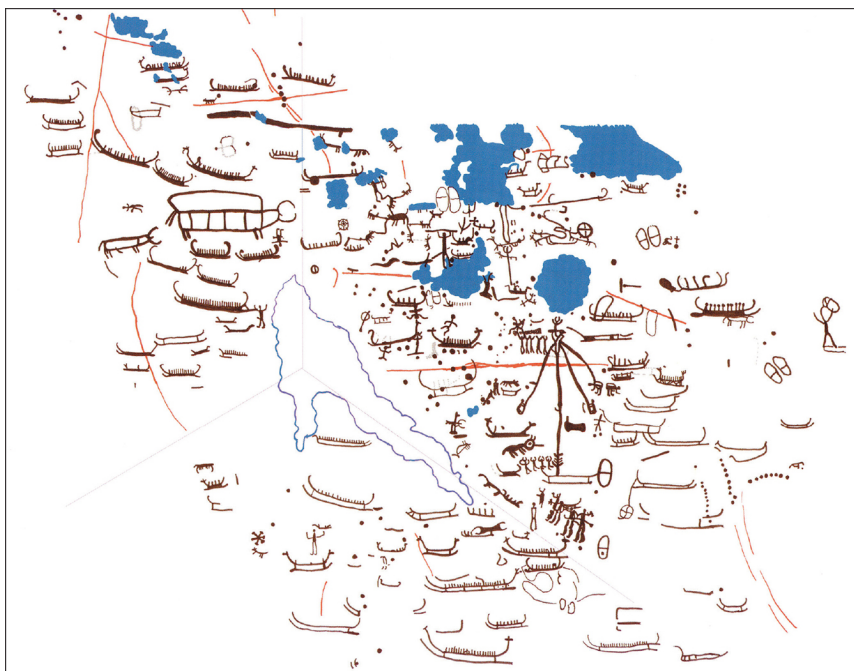


Fig. 8.6. One of the most outstanding rock art panels in the Tanum area, Tanum 311. Note the spectacular combinations of bulls and ships (documentation by Tanums hällristningsmuseum Underslös (THU); Remade by Fredell 2003: source: SHFA).

In the following we will argue that the entanglement with metal in the Bronze Age created or triggered similar, social needs to interact on a seasonal basis at maritime communicative places in the landscape. However, it is important to stress that the societal and environmental conditions for the interactions during the Bronze Age differed considerably from those that took place earlier in the NT areas. Even if there were great differences between the interactions that took place in these remote rock art areas, they seems nevertheless to have been governed by some similar features, namely, the flows of certain commodities (prey animals/metals, people and things), as well as durability (the rock, rock art), temporality, velocity and most importantly the social reproduction of power, social relations and ideology (Hodder 2012: 5, 31).

An important cognitive feature in the process of creating images in these remote areas was to depict different kinds of transformations or, so to speak, ‘taking the outside in’. In this context we could also imagine for instance a metonymic connection between rock images of animal ship transformations and the social reality of a ship with animal features, being sent into the ocean to hunt. As seems

to have been the case, there would have been a ritual connecting stone to image to the physical entity of the ship, thus ensuring its safe return. In fact, we have to envisage the possibility of a wider semiotic category of the wild into which ideas of prey, the hunted, raw violence and their potency for domesticated life, can be envisaged. In this sense the metal can be interpreted as a ‘prey animal’ that is sought in wild places and brought back to be domesticated into discrete cultural forms. Like hunted animals, metals, amber, etc. are characterised by instability and unpredictable flows in appearance and availability.

Taking the outside in has many different connotations of the wild emanating from several diverse origins in the Early Bronze Age and becoming increasingly condensed and embodied in human–non-human forms of violence in the Late Bronze Age, e.g. in forms of the warrior bull figure that appears in the rock art. The bull image itself (content) may have been an inflow from southern Europe since the South Scandinavian Rock Art Tradition (ST) starts to flourish at the same time that Scandinavia became deeply involved and interlinked with the European metal networks, 1700–1500 BC. It is now proven that Scandinavia obtained copper from the Aegean World 1700–1500 BC (Ling *et al.* 2013), where the bull image was an established feature of ritual. In western Sweden the bull image became incorporated into the new custom of making rock art where it ensured the durability of the War canoes. In a sense the introduction of the bull image in rock art is an introduction of the ‘Stranger King’ (cf. below, on the ‘Stranger King’).



Fig. 8.7. Transformations between elk & ships at Nämforsen, a common theme for the North Scandinavian rock art tradition. ÅdalsLiden 193 Nämforsen (photo: Almgren; source: SHFA).

It appears as if the transformative ‘animistic’ features of the ship were articulated differently in the various regions in Scandinavia during the Early Bronze Age, but this ‘regional’ feature could have served a similar ‘animistic’ function, namely to ensure the strength and durability of the ship and maritime ventures (cf. Westerdahl 2005). Thus the bull and ship combination seems to have

been a special feature for northern Bohuslän during period 1 and the early phase of period 2. In other regions the bull is instead substituted by other animals such as wild boars (Nordén 1925; Coles 2000).

In the late phase of period 2 the horse replaces the transformative role of the bull in southern Scandinavian and became an integral part of the prows of the ships (Kaul 2013; Ling 2013). Even if the bull-ship combination and transformation seems to have vanished later in the Bronze Age, some elements of this survived, such as the bull horns and lurs in the ships. Moreover, in the Late Bronze Age the elements of the bull became integrated into the warriors depicted on the rocks in the form of bi-horned helmets (Fig. 8.8). Other fascinating images found in Late Bronze Age rock art that recall the bull-ship connection include the acrobats who somersault over the ships holding bi-horned warriors. The somersaulting figures have extended calves, a characteristic of the bull warrior transformations, which suggest that the power embodied in the bull warrior figure is still attached in some way to the images of the ship (Fig. 8.8).

The entanglement with metal

At this point the argument about rock art needs to be seen in the broader context of the spread of metals. It cannot be coincidental that such an enormous increase in the density of rock art should occur at the same time as the increased dependency of the Nordic Zone on access to metals. As Ling (*et al.*) have shown, even if metal sources were available in Scandinavia there was an apparently deliberate avoidance of their exploitation and a rapid deployment of human social resources to bring the Nordic Zone in contact with external sources of metals (Fig. 8.9). During the Bronze Age the Scandinavian sphere was dependent on foreign metal sources, and this dependency – or, rather, entanglement (Hodder 2012) – was highly complex and involved human and thing relations on many levels (societies, communities, small groups, etc.). Hodder explained the notion of entanglement as follows:

‘... entrapment occurs because we have invested labour, resources, time, in things; it occurs because we have come to depend on the positive benefits deriving from the greater flows of resources and information through the network; entrapment occurs because various forms of ownership of things may lead to rights and obligations towards each other. Thus the notion of entanglement as I define it is not just a return to notions of materialism and environmental constraint. It is not the materials themselves that cause entanglement, but the interlacing of materials with the whole suite of ways in which humans and things depend on each other. So it may be better to think of the entangled web as made not of strings but of multi-stranded cables. It is precisely the interactions between the multiple strands – the material, biological, social, cultural, psychological, cognitive strands of the individual cables – that make the entanglement so strong’ (Hodder 2011: 164)



Fig. 8.8. In the Late Bronze Age the elements of the bull become integrated into the warriors depicted on the rocks in the form of bi-horned helmets. Anthropomorphic bull-figures, warriors holding weapons from the Tanum and Kville area. Top left; documentation after Högberg 1998, top right; photo by Högberg 1982 (source: SHFA). Bottom left; photo by Milstreu and Pröhl, THU 2009; bottom right; photo by Almgren 1955 (source: SHFA).

The engagement in metal should be seen as a highly complex process between humans and things dependent on aspects such as flow and temporality, velocity and durability (Hodder 2012: 254). The entanglement in metals during the Bronze Age involved minerals, miners, traders and transport systems in distant regions, foreign and local maritime networks and alliances, local settlements sites where the bronze became casted after functional and ritual needs. It involved the regional hoarding praxis, mortuary praxis and not least the regional casting of weapons and tools. Scandinavia and other regions in Europe could of course survive without metals, but as Hodder has stressed regarding the Neolithisation, or today's dependence on cars, the entanglement, or entrapment, in such complex material processes cannot be reversed but is replaced by similar complex material engagement. The entanglement with metal generated a complex mesh of communicative, spatial, temporal aspects of human and thing relations and social relations and of power, dominance and alienation.

Thus, coping with this entanglement or system demanded corporate strategies between regions with different advantages, and to make this system work it had to involve almost all economic and social sectors of society. In this context different regions seem to have had different relationships to this interactive mesh. Coastal regions of Denmark, Sweden and Norway were deeply involved in the maritime matters, i.e. building, crewing ships and creating and maintaining maritime institutions. The inland 'agricultural accumulation areas' were deeply involved in agricultural matters such as feeding livestock and crops. The latter regions were

also the ones that obtained the most metal due to the stability, predictability and long-term use of these products, while the maritime world was more fragile due in part to the instability of finances and the metal flows. Scandinavia succeeded in this process, much due to the corporative strategies between the agrarian and maritime social spheres of production and relations. In short: the corporative strategies between the agrarian and maritime spheres, the overall demand for metal, the creation of a maritime institution and the access and control of amber, gave rise to southern Scandinavia's cosmopolitical entanglement with metals in the Bronze Age.

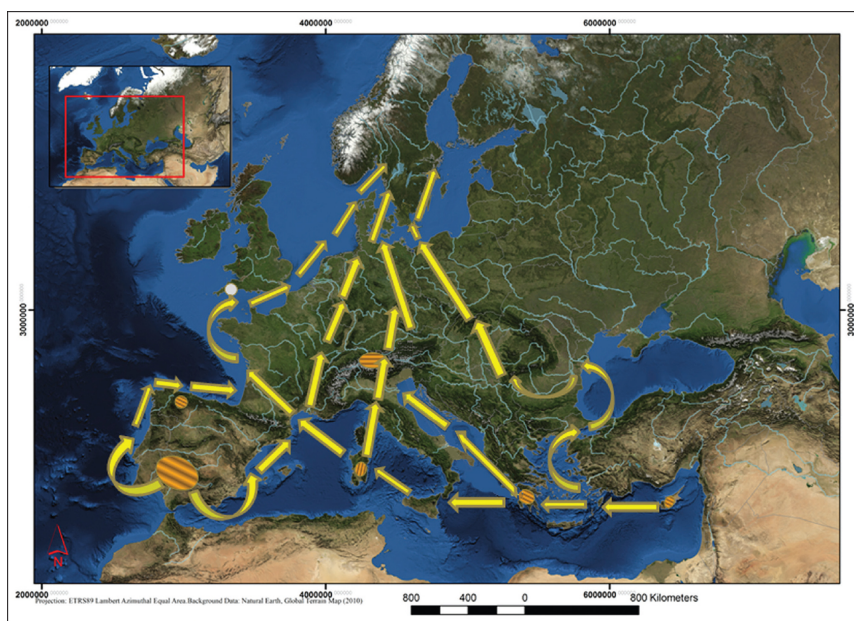


Fig. 8.9. Scandinavia's entanglement with metal in the Bronze Age. Possible flows and routes of metal from the mining district in Europe to Scandinavia in the Bronze Age. It is partly based on existing theories of interaction between the north and south in the Bronze Age (after Ling et al. 2013).

The different regional engagements in this system, also created two major ritual expressions: a maritime-based one with figurative rock art, coastal cairns, ship-shaped graves or ship-shaped bronzes; and a terrestrial one, including earthly barrows, major bronze hoards, figurines and cupmarks. However, some strong ritual, religious/cosmological features were evident in both of these spheres and bridged these ritual dichotomies (Kaul 1998).

The agrarian sphere was deeply dependent on the maritime for the metal and vice versa, i.e. the maritime sphere was dependent on the consumption of the metal by the stable agrarian spheres. However, this dependency or relationship was not to be overt; rather, it was suppressed or obscured. Here it is relevant to stress the absence of house imagery in the rock art. Rather than being just a coincidence, this could possibly reflect the different social actions and concepts of

the two spheres. In a sense, rock art could have had certain political aims and dimensions and the large number of ship depictions in the coastal areas may, in itself, have served to enhance the importance of the maritime sphere and even, to some extent, make it more dominant. It seems reasonable to assume that groups and individuals may have alternated between the maritime and terrestrial spheres. In general, however, heavy maritime labour, such as overseas expeditions, trade, transport, boatbuilding, burials, ceremonies, warfare and other encounters would have represented a major investment in people and materials. For these purposes or occasions, some groups and individuals may have suspended their terrestrial livelihood to take up a seasonal or occasional maritime livelihood, while others may have had more permanent positions in this sphere. It may have been important to mark or manifest such transitions in some way and it is tempting to picture the rock art in this light.

As a result, the entanglement with metal created new needs to aggregate and interact, preferably on a seasonal basis and at communicative maritime locations along the coast. Many of the coastal rock art regions could have worked primarily as ports for metal distribution in southern Scandinavia, and thereby functioned as 'aggregations sites' for groups with a mobile occupation, such as travellers/warriors/traders and for groups with a more domestic occupation than that of inland areas (Ling 2013). Bearing this in mind, we may assume that people from a larger area may have visited the rock art areas in order to maintain, reproduce or initiate socio-ritual structures of power, identity, ideology and cosmology. So in a sense, this process triggered needs to interact and aggregate that were similar to the ones that occurred in Nämforsen or at Alta and Trondheim during the Neolithic, whilst the Bronze Age 'prey' was made of metal rather than flesh and blood.

The power of alterity

Turning to the rock art, the earliest images from Bohuslän concentrate our attention on animal forms, boats and quite abstract if ephemeral human figures. If our observations are empirically verified, we would also argue that the dominant animal and ship forms are transformations of each other. Specifically, that the shape of the bull, as a principle animal form, transforms into a ship form, and both are joined together in groups that suggest a herd/fleet in movement. These scenes have been dated to the Early Bronze Age in the Nordic zone but we can also trace rock pecked figures of animals and boats back to the Neolithic and potentially they may even be of Mesolithic date (Fig. 8.7; cf. Helskog 1999; Westerdahl 2005; Gjerde 2010). The important difference as far as their Bronze Age appearance is concerned is first their density and complex appearance in apparently narrative forms. In the later Bronze Age, human figures with bull figure characteristics become prominent features of the rock art. A significant transformation in the appearance of humans, ships and bulls occurs during this period, continuing through the PRIA and later.

The rock art is not only prevalent but located deliberately in coastal settings. In some cases quite literally one would have had to be in a boat to have applied the art on a rock surface. As we have argued, the location of rock art is linked to maritime access and the fact that coastal western Sweden had to be the location

for materials and ship building skills. Hence access to trade in metals and amber from the Danish islands was dependent on a reciprocal exchange with the supply of ship and maritime skills of people in western Sweden. Such pragmatism in comparative advantage may well be a matter of the political economy of the earlier Bronze Age in the Nordic Zone but it does not answer the more interesting questions concerning the content of the art nor the reasons for its concentration.

One of these is the nature of the divide of domestic/wild, human/non-human in the distinction between the different regions in the Nordic Bronze Age. In the context of a rock art composed of animals and ships, the common feature is the body. In the Early Bronze Age, the human figure is simply not prominent and it takes some imagination to say that the pairs of figures in the ship images are definitely human. Instead it is the transformation of animal into ship and the fact that features of the animal (horns, body shape) are translated into the ship form that suggest the two forms are found in each other. Following Viveiros de Castro's argument on perspectivism, we could surmise that whilst they may share aspects of their separate bodies to create a ship/bull image, the hybrid form will show what they have in common. In more animistic terms, what bull and ship would share in common is a soul (given there is no Judeo-Christian body/soul dichotomy) which in turn is also shared by the ephemeral presence of human figures.

Whilst different forms can move back forth across the same/alterity divide, this is precisely because they share a spirit essence although it is the form of their bodies that gives them a different perspective and potency in its actualisation. But the classic statement on the relation of body forms to the idea they share a common substance or soul is the much neglected work of Levy Bruhl. In *L'Ame Primitive* published in 1927, he provided the much cited words (usually for negative reasons) 'He (the primitive) therefore sees no difficulty in metamorphoses which to us appear utterly incredible: beings can change their size and form in the blink of an eye' (Levy Bruhl 1996 (1927): 8). Not long after, in a work dedicated to Levy Bruhl, the Melanesianist Maurice Leenhardt made the following observation on the Canaque concept of humanity:

'Animals, plants, mythic beings have the same claim men have to be considered "kamo" if circumstances cause them to assume a certain humanity'... He [*kamo*] undergoes metamorphoses; he is like a character endowed with sumptuous wardrobe who perpetually changes costume ... With our own concept of man such a view is impossible, but it is possible with a broader representation of what is human. For the Melanesian, a glance, in fact, is enough to give the form of humanity to an animal'. (1979 [1947]: 24–25)

But in the Early Bronze Age rock art of Bohuslän, to be human is not emphasised. Rather it is the capacity of boats, animals and celestial features and things to transform into each other through the possession of a common 'soul' or spirit, but these movements across the alterity divide are not complete.

Willerslev has recently extended the argument in a Frazerian comparison that includes Palaeolithic cave art that bears analogues to our situation on rock art in Bohuslän (Willerslev 2011). Following Willerslev on the *Not Not-Animal* theme (Willerslev 2004), transformations are about keeping original identity whilst possessing key elements of the form being metamorphosed into.

The transformation of a ship-bull allows the ship to be like a bull but not exactly the same, i.e. still to be recognisably a ship. This is emphasised by the occasional

presence of bull figures alongside that of the ship-bull image although the latter is dominant. This is the same point that Willserlev makes regarding the Yukagir hunter, who both mimics the prey to empathise and lure it in, but remains a hunter and is able to kill it. The ability to be the same and different remains possible because of the animist feature of a common essence or soul that is what actually constitutes the passage from one side of the alterity divide to the other. It would be consistent for our argument that the ship is also identified with being human, hence the ephemeral human figures inside the body of the ship. But it is in the passage from the Danish Islands across to western Sweden that the human aspect of the ship fuses with the potency of the bull and the wilderness of the alterity divide.

Even today, taking the ferry across from Jutland to western Sweden, the shock is palpable as the flat landscape of the peninsula is left and instead the steep granite cliffs of the islands and coast of western Sweden are met with for the first time. The rock art that becomes so prevalent in the Early Bronze Age in western Sweden is basically the legacy of hunter-gatherer animism that can probably, in part, be traced back to much earlier origins (Goldhan *et al.* 2010). From c. 1700 BC the demand for ships and maritime technologies and skills from the developing Bronze Age in the Danish Isles complemented by the demand for amber in international exchanges, began to transform this legacy by first intensifying it. Ships are depicted literally as bulls or having bull-like characteristics. No doubt the need for bulllike potency would imply that the spirit of the ship would have equal powers to survive long distance voyaging and natural disasters such as trading expeditions in the North Sea. Rock art as ritual depictions of the idealized sending out and ensuring the return of sea-going expeditions is not unusual in later periods and elsewhere precisely because of the endurance of the images cut into stone. However, this ship-bull potency was to be transformed through the Bronze Age by the addition of an anthromorphised warrior-bull element.

The 'Stranger King' or Sahllins in the Bronze Age

'The king is an outsider, often an immigrant warrior prince whose father is a god or a king of his native land. But, exiled by his own love of power or banished for a murder, the hero is unable to succeed there. Instead he takes power in another place, and *through a woman*: princess of the native people whom he gains by a miraculous exploit involving feats of strength, ruse, rape, athletic prowess, and/or the murder of his predecessor.' (Sahllins 1981: 115)

In the Later Bronze Age, the rock art changes and a second (warrior) insider/outside dichotomy is revealed (Fig. 8.8). These differences may be related to changing perceptions of society and personhood in the Bronze Age. During the transition from the Early Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age, southern Scandinavia underwent some major geopolitical changes due to new exchange networks, new amber routes and over-exploitation of soil in the west (Kristiansen and Rowlands 1998: 96–97). This process may have triggered hostile and antagonistic situations, making factors such as war and conflict a more central theme. The depiction of anthromorphs changes dramatically during the Bronze Age, from being an anonymous, ephemeral and collective feature during the Early Bronze Age, more or less adjusted after the ship, into a large central feature during the Late Bronze Age often displayed in a hostile or antagonistic way.

As is well known the warrior ethos is prevalent in the wider European Bronze Age context and as an image of a power of foreign origin it does not replace the bull-ship power of alterity from the Early Bronze Age, but rather fuses with it. The Bull-Anthropomorph figure holding weapons dominates, in some cases quite literally holding a carved ship in its hands. Described as some of the most well-known examples of the Late Bronze Age warrior figures in the rock art, bodies are bull-like with massive calves, thighs and shoulders as well as the distinctive bi-horned head (Fig. 8.8). In contrast with the Early Bronze Age where human figures are scarcely present and appear ephemeral and incorporated into the bull-ship image, from the Late Bronze Age onwards, it is the violence of the massive bull-warrior figure that dominates.

Sahlins, as shown in the above quote, argues that in practically all human societies there is a tendency to locate power as originating from the outside. Whilst this got him into some difficulties with Obeyesekere's accusation that his 'culturalist' thesis disguised the elitist justification of the potency of the foreign in a colonialist context, nevertheless the idea that 'society creators' are often fashioned as outsider heroes (within society!) has gained widespread ethnographic support (cf. Henley and Caldwell 2009). Sahlins drew on the work of Hocart (1927) on kingship in Fiji and especially on that of the French philologist Georges Dumézil who showed that the foundation myths of ancient polities throughout the Indo-European language area, from Italy to India, feature a complementarity of opposites which the Romans called *gravitas* and *celeritas*. *Gravitas* is the venerable, peaceful and productive disposition of an established community, personified in a female priest and an earth/land based ritual elite. *Celeritas* is youthful, disorderly, magical, creative violence and its personification is the *Stranger King* (Sahlins 2009).

As a binary category we can use these insights to recognize differences in perceptions of power within the Nordic Bronze Age. Sahlins' argument depends on the relationship of an identity to assimilating the potency of alterity and the spaces lying outside the political community viz:

'all power is foreign in origin, in the sense that the spaces beyond the political community are the loci of other-than-human subjects – ranging from beasts to gods'. (Sahlins 2009: 184)

In Oceania certain affines are Gods and the potency of alterity lies precisely in the capacity to bring in from the outside the conditions supporting and maintaining fertility and 'bare life'. This is the basis for Sahlins' claim that 'Stranger Kings' are inseparable from elementary forms of kinship and the domestication of alterity. Some years ago, one of us proposed an Omaha system for the Bronze Age that equates mobility with the expansion of affinal relations (Rowlands 1980).

Kristiansen and Larsson's summary of the movement of foreign women and octagonal swords in Tumulus Culture groups and the Nordic region exemplifies this pattern of absorption and domestication of 'Stranger Kings' (Kristiansen and Larsen 2005: 232, ff. 107; Rowlands 1980). Note the retention of signs of foreign origin or the taking of foreign forms such as the solid hilted swords and the mimetic power gained by absorbing them into a Nordic style and symbolism. The domestication of signs of power that lie outside or even against moral order is also a sign of the power that underlies that order. Domestication is often preceded by exploits of violence and power, including murder, incest or other crimes against

kinship and morality (Sahlins 2009: 182). But once out of the wild and in power, the 'Stranger King' provides the means to life giving and life taking; the dark side of kingship, what would otherwise lie beyond human knowledge or control, is harnessed as a kind of creative violence.

We can imagine that this is an endemic feature of European societies from the Bronze Age through to PRIA and beyond. Why the idea of 'warlike' barbarian hordes from the East is nothing of the sort but part of the structure of European social reproduction. Faced with intransigence, the scale of violence imposed is increased as is the attempt to control and domesticate it but the important point is that there is inevitability to the process of incorporating what appear to be contradictory signs of power.

The important point is that the 'Stranger King' creates new value. In the Hawaiian islands, as described by Sahlins, Captain Cook and later Europeans brought iron and European goods and fertility for women (Sahlins 1985). But they did not remain 'European' but were Hawaiianised (cf. Thomas) as was Cook's body such that, after his death, those who killed him came to the crew to inquire when he would be returning (i.e. reincarnated as a God). The domestication of foreign value into local forms becomes, therefore, the basis for establishing comparative advantage and the capacity to enter into alliance and exchange (cf. Ling and Rowlands 2012). The construction of value is, therefore, the cultural product of the process of transfer and domestication which in turn is embedded within a wider shared cosmology of east to west, north to south transfers of the conditions of fertility and reproduction; in very broad terms the well-established themes in Indo-European cosmologies (where incidentally kinship denies the role of ancestors and alliance/affines rather than descent is a significant principle).

Whilst Kristiansen's emphasis on warrior elite ideologies and their spread in the European Bronze Age is quite consistent with our argument for the application of the 'Stranger King' thesis, it must also have been accompanied by what it reproduces through the input of new forms of value. If 'Stranger Kings' have monumental burials, personalised weapons and heroic narratives, the alternative suggests a principle of land and autochthony where burial would be naturalised (implications of water, ritual burning to produce a sacrificial form of burial and excarnation come to mind).

Thus the coastal zones with rock art may have worked as concrete arenas for the fusion of wild and domestic forces (*Celiritas*) and (*Gravitas*). Even if the rock art mostly seem to depict the 'wild' and violent side of the world there are scenes with clear domestic features such as the plough scenes, ards and domestic animals. It is therefore tempting to interpret the wedding scenes or the scene with warriors copulating with animals or the use of ards or ploughs as a fusion of these forces

The fusion of the warrior 'king' with the potency of the bull-ship image is a distinctive feature therefore of Bohuslän. The bull warriors depicted in the rock art are not accompanied by evidence of actual bronze metalwork or burials which suggests that the rock is not simply a surface for images to be inscribed upon but is an active material of some sort. By emphasising a difference in the materialities of stone and bronze, we can make more sense of the way fine detailed images of weapons and armour would appear on stone reliefs in south-west Iberia and elsewhere as part of the spread of the bull-warrior-ship cult.

In fact, several Scandinavian features from the Bronze Age have been inspired by

the Mediterranean (Thrane 1990; Kristiansen and Larsson 2005) and there are some striking similarities between the horned warriors in Extremaduran rock art, Nuragic figurines from Sardinia, depictions of ‘sea peoples’ with horned helmets in the tomb of Ramesses II and the horned warriors depicted on the rock art in western Sweden and the horned bronze figurines from Grevesvånge in Denmark (Fig. 8.10, see also Harrison 2004; Kristiansen and Larsson 2005). In this context it is important to stress that Scandinavia also ‘imported’ copper from these regions during the Bronze Age (Ling *et al.* 2012). Even if these horned anthropomorphs were produced in remote regions during the Bronze Age, they co-exist within, more or less, the same epoch, 1200–800 BC (Harrison 2004).

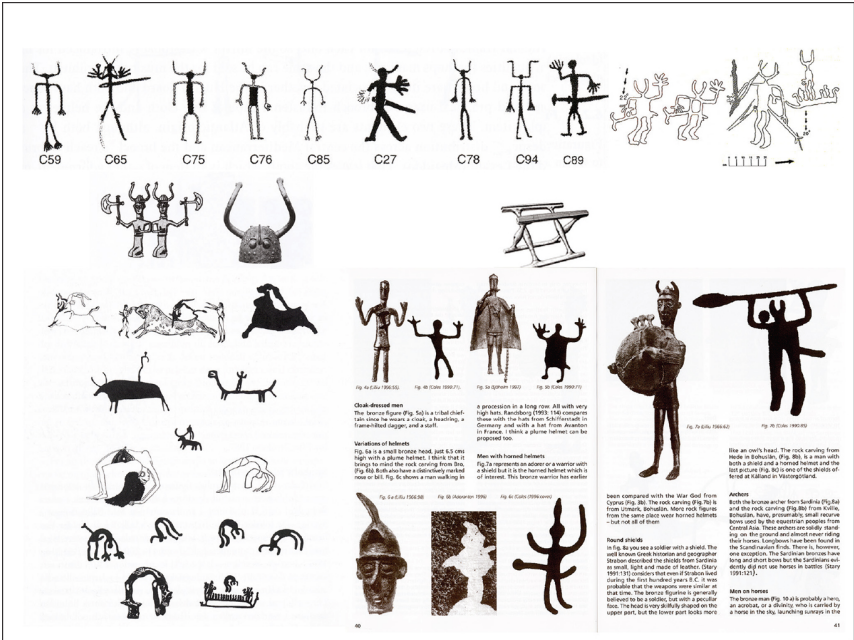


Fig. 8.10. Cosmopolitical codes and features from different parts of Bronze Age Europe. Top: warriors in Spanish rock art marked with ‘C’; Swedish rock art to the left with no marks. Mid-section: horned figurines from Grevesvånge, the horned helmet from Viskø, and the camp stool from Guldhøj, Denmark. Bottom left: Acrobats and bulls from the Mycenaean world and from Scandinavian rock art (after Winter 2002). Bottom right: Warriors on Nuragic figurines compared with Scandinavian rock art (after Sjöholm 2003).

So we could therefore argue that the bodily incorporation of the bull feature in the warriors depicted in Bohuslän during the Late Bronze Age was triple layered: a legacy of the NT rock art tradition in terms of the emphasis of animistic feature; a strong ritual feature for the Early Bronze Age that ensured the durability of the War canoes with connotations to the Mediterranean World; and a strong ritualised feature combining the bull image with the head of the warrior, resulting in acquired strength and powers transmitted from the bull to the warrior, and related to the Pan-European warrior code, or theme, during the Bronze Age.

We may also contrast the images of violence of the bull-ship-warrior imagery with that of the warrior elites buried with swords and other weapons. The 'dark side' of the violence of the 'Stranger King', emphasised by Sahllins existing in the context of affinal relations and exchange, appears quite literally on the rock art and for all we know (given our modern perceptions of sexual violence) would be within the logic of social reproduction.

Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of this paper, fresh visits to the rock art always seem to generate new thoughts and ideas. Taking the 'rock art' seriously does mean more and more careful 'looking'. But the trend at present is to relate the rock art as sites to wider considerations of settlement, metalwork distributions and other forms of contextualisation. Homogenisation is therefore a danger. Our emphasis instead has been to differentiate. First, to recognise the unique settings of significant clusters of rock art; second, to show that stone seems opposed to bronze and the maritime social context of rock art differs from standard generalisations based on the agrarian sphere about the nature of Bronze Age settlement, burial rites and the articulation of social inequality. Differentiation suggest that the distinct legacies of earlier periods still pertain in different regions – for example, the role of amber found in burials in the Neolithic in Jutland and only as object of exchange outside the Danish Islands in the Bronze Age – is an example of how the legacy of continuity in the significance of amber can be transformed and a new 'exchange value' created. 'Taking the rock art' seriously, i.e. on its own – has also raised the issue of a separate hunter-gatherer legacy in the rock art. What may have been earlier animal-human-thing transformations – we argue – became transformed into the ship-bull image of a container with the Early Bronze Age need for ships and voyaging to acquire metals and distribute amber that was both ritually and physically efficacious in ways never needed before. But the important point to stress is how the changes were dependent on the political and economic impact of the metal trade, etc., combining with continuities in cosmology that shaped the ontological conditions of a basic life. To understand the distinctive nature of the Nordic Bronze Age, it seems we have to deal with the complexities of the broad interpolation of long term continuities and legacies of a pre Bronze Age boreal world with the impact of dependency on trade in metals and prestige goods from the wider European and Mediterranean settings. It is the fusion of these principles that distinguishes the Nordic Bronze Age from the rest of Europe, set in the complexities of regional differentiations within Scandinavia.

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Trading images: exchange, transformation and identity in rock art from Valcamonica between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age

Alberto Marretta

Recent finds of bronze and stone decorated artefacts at archaeological sites in Valcamonica cast new light on an archaeology of images beyond that found solely in rock art, and suggest new evidence of a possible close relationship between artisans and rock art makers. By analysing similarities in techniques and figurative programmes between rock art and decorated objects this paper suggests the existence of specific negotiators responsible for translating forms and themes across different media and geographical areas. Some carved animal styles, which appear to have been graphically dependent on the European Bronze Age tradition of bronze decoration, and the sun-boat theme specifically, are analysed. Rock art from Valcamonica, with its susceptibility to external influences as well as its capacity to be reinterpreted according to local traits, indicates that there were robust links connecting Alpine peoples, Mediterranean areas and Central Europe between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, and that a vast heritage of Bronze Age symbols were still thriving in the core ideology of Iron Age communities.

KEYWORDS: rock art, Valcamonica, Iron Age, bronze decoration

Introduction

Rock art from Valcamonica, one of the best known groups of prehistoric images in Europe, bears many figures or entire 'styles', that seem to depend on contacts with foreign graphic trends or techniques adopted in artefact ornamentation. These elements are of particular importance for investigating the reasons behind the adoption of forms and symbolic ideas across different peoples, as well as the way

these elements were introduced and accepted into the new milieu – and then exploited (e.g. from decorated and portable objects to rock surfaces outdoors). They are also very useful for recognising the technical and analytical process of transferring the image into another material (e.g. from vase painting or bronze etching to rock art) and to identify the negotiators of this very process (artisans/carvers?) and the subtle transformations that the original representation undergoes when mixed and adapted to local cultural habits.

However, some basic issues still remain: why do we find the same image etched on the shoulder of a bronze vessel and carved on an open-air rock surface placed hundreds of kilometres away, across deep valleys and beyond high mountain passes? Who made those rock carvings and what was the relationship linking its creator with the individual who made a bronze vessel? Does it make sense to look for a single carver¹ or should we instead seek to define the proper social framework to clarify what we mean when we discuss the rock art ‘artists’? These are bold questions and one needs to consider rock art not just as an absolute source of reliable information in itself,² but as one source among the varied archaeological components (settlements, burials or cult sites excavations) which can provide hints about the prehistoric society responsible for its production. In Valcamonica the issue of authorship has been addressed briefly in many ways: prehistoric rock art makers have been imagined variously as shamans or ‘priests’ (Anati 1960; 2004a; Priuli 1985), as young initiates to adult rites of passage, the subject matter of the imagery varying depending on the sex of the carver (Fossati 1991; Bevan 2006; Fossati 2007a), or as people belonging to sub-groups of the community (e.g. religious brotherhood?) carving at specific sites (Sansoni and Marretta 2002). On the other hand, a recent thorough survey has stripped rock art of any sacred characteristics, attempting instead to demonstrate that many of the carvings were created by shepherds during their ordinary movement between settlements sites and high altitude pastures (Alexander 2012).

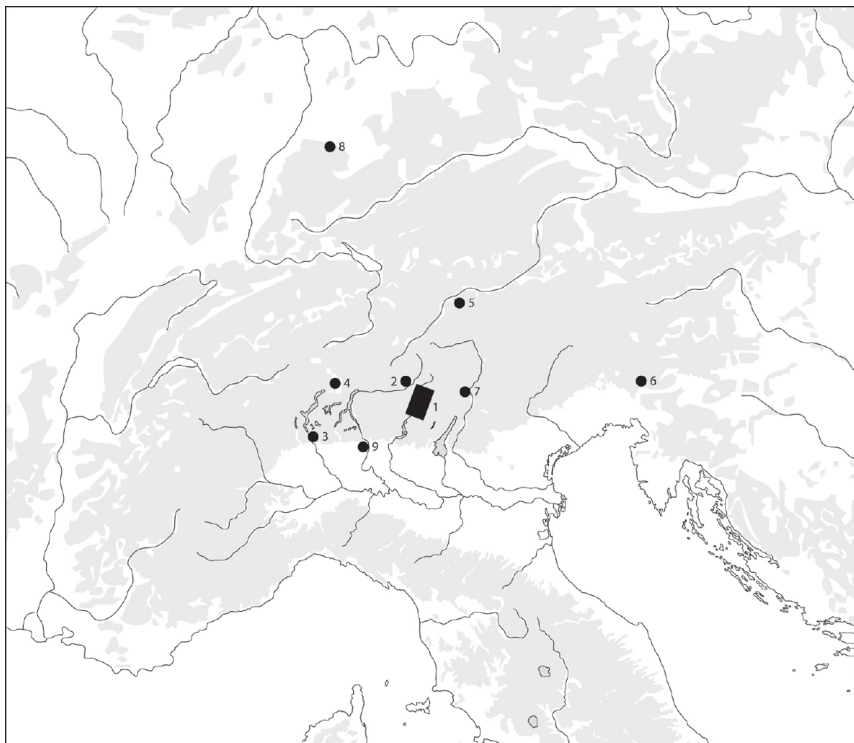


Fig. 9.1. Map with places cited in text: 1. Valcamonica, Brescia (Italy); 2. Tirano, Valtellina (Italy); 3. Sesto Calende (Italy); 4. Giubiasco, Canton Ticino (Switzerland); 5. Fließ, Tyrol (Austria); 6. Most na Soči (Slovenia); 7. Sanzeno, Val di Non, Trentino-Alto Adige (Italy); 8. Eberdingen-Hochdorf, Baden-Württemberg (Germany); 9. Trezzo sull'Adda (Italy).

This paper analyses the evidence of ‘traded’ images, i.e. consciously and systematically exchanged graphic shapes and themes across varied media and different people living inside and around the Alps, with specific attention to the rock art material of Valcamonica. It also attempts to track the existence of rock art makers as a possible *class*, meaning a group of people who shared a common set of rules, subjects and forms through time during the Iron Age of the central Alps. The main evidence for the existence of this class comes from the relationship between the carvers and the rock art imagery itself and the whole set of contemporary archaeological findings from northern Italy, including sophisticated craftwork in metal, ceramic and stone workmanship. This is in fact the ground where individuals, physical objects, graphic symbols and styles are transferred between different peoples and where it is possible to trace the complex network of cultural interactions which are recognisable among the Alpine populations of the Iron Age through the different media that have survived (Marzatico and Gleirscher 2004; Marzatico *et al.* 2011). We can also argue that the themes that occur most frequently among different peoples could also be considered the ones most easily understood or adoptable, a further hint that widespread ideas such as the motif of the sun-boat with bird heads were part of a common symbolic language existing

throughout Europe.

Not so unexpectedly, what have survived as the most richly decorated objects from late prehistoric Europe belong to a class of artefacts – requiring great skill and technical production – to be considered the core of a gift-exchange practice between élites, a fact that somehow restricts the possibilities of familiarity with a whole series of images and themes to people belonging to the chain of production-fruition of the objects themselves.

Valcamonica rock art: geographical and cultural context

Valcamonica is one of the main valleys of the central Alps (Fig. 9.1). It is situated to the north of the cities of Brescia and Bergamo and lies between Lake Iseo and the glaciers of Adamello. The river Oglio, which rises at Ponte di Legno on the slopes of the Passo del Tonale, runs through the valley, a distance of more than 70 km. The landscape switches between broad sweeps of flat valley floor and sudden natural bottlenecks where the valley narrows, as at Breno, Cedegolo and Edolo. Gentle slopes, resulting from the accumulation of debris brought down by streams across the millennia, characterise the lower elevations of the Middle Valley, in particular the areas around Niardo, Braone, the zone below Mount Concarena and the zone around Capo di Ponte. Easy passes connect Valcamonica to the Trentino and Tyrol region (Tonale), to Valtellina and the western Alps (Aprica), to Valtrompia, Valsabbia and the Giudicarie Valleys (Crocedomini), while to south-west Val Cavallina leads naturally to the western portion of the Po Plain.

Research conducted in Valcamonica until the present day has identified a large number – in the hundreds of thousands – of images carved into the rocks. They represent one of the biggest collections of post-Palaeolithic rock art in the world and constitute the highest density of rock carvings in Europe. Other remarkable groups can be found in Bohuslän (Sweden), Mont Bego (France), Galicia (Spain) and in the Côa valley (Portugal). A commonly accepted framework (Anati 2004b; De Marinis 1994) considers the Valcamonica rock art tradition to begin with rare images created by Late Palaeolithic hunters (seventh–fifth millennia BC) and carries on through the successive phases of prehistory, continuing to historic times (thirteenth–sixteenth centuries AD). The main phase of activity took place during the Iron Age and developed in parallel with the well-known Italic cultures of the first millennium BC (Etruscans, Celts, Raeti, Veneti). The valley had close contacts with these populations, and the ideological influences were reciprocal, lasting up until the late first century BC, when the Romans added the Alpine tribes to their vast empire.

Most of the images were made using either a stone or metal tool to peck the surface of bedrock outcrops, preferably grey or violet–blue sandstone smoothed by the slow movement of the Quaternary glaciers. Normally the engraved rocks are grouped together, forming concentrations of rock art. These are found in various parts of Valcamonica, but mostly in the middle portion of the valley, between Ceto to the south and Sellero to the north, with modern-day Capo di Ponte in the centre. Outside this area there are other rock art groups: Luine (Darfo Boario Terme) is the largest in the southern valley, while on a smaller scale we also find engravings at Plemo, Piancogno, Berzo Demo, Malonno and Sonico.

Two particular factors were behind Valcamonica becoming, in 1979, the first

Italian site on UNESCO's World Heritage List. One is the deep time-depth of the phenomenon, the other is the expressive richness of the images, which are full of information about the life and thought of people living in the heart of the European continent at a time before written documents.

Archaeology and rock art from Valcamonica: filling some gaps

Without archaeological excavations nearby rock art panels,⁴ the main method used to contextualise rock art in Valcamonica has always been by analogy, or comparison with findings from other territories of northern Italy.⁵ This type of analysis has mainly been pursued to support chronological frameworks (De Marinis 1988; 1994; Fossati 1991; Anati 1963; 2004b), although many of these theories ignore the various aspects concerning the adoption and transformation of an image, for example, from a bronze etching into a carving cut on a hard rock surface. But is it still true that we cannot compare rock art with any local artefacts? Three objects, two of which were recently found in Valcamonica, can help shed light on a poorly known archaeological aspect: imagery *beyond* rock art *within* Valcamonica itself.

The first evidence is known from the late 1920s (Bonafini 1954; 1927), but has remained overlooked by rock art scholars in its profound relationship with some images on the rocks. It is a small slab of stone bearing two kinds of decoration (Fig. 9.2a): a central frieze containing a continuous script in the local pre-Roman alphabet and a figurative background composed of part of a horse in the upper register and another partial horse (this time missing the lower part) below. In the lower left corner there is a very weathered image (part of a human figure?) and an unidentifiable object just above the lower horse. The inner portions of the horses are filled with '*occhi di dado*' of different sizes. While the script has been variously studied right up to the present day (Morandi 2004), the figurative ensemble has been only been examined in a superficial way. The inscription suggests that this artefact was locally produced, as do the figures of horses, which are different from the ones usually depicted in situla art, and instead display striking similarities with the scratched horses from the rock art site of Pià d'Ort (Sansoni and Gavaldo 1995). Although less precise, probably due to the different technique employed, they can be compared with pecked examples from Bedolina and Seradina, too (Fig. 9.3). It is worth remembering that the association between inscriptions in the local pre-Roman alphabet and figures as shown by the small slab from Cividate Camuno is a common trait on many carved rocks (Martinotti 2009; Porter 2007; Solano and Marretta 2009).

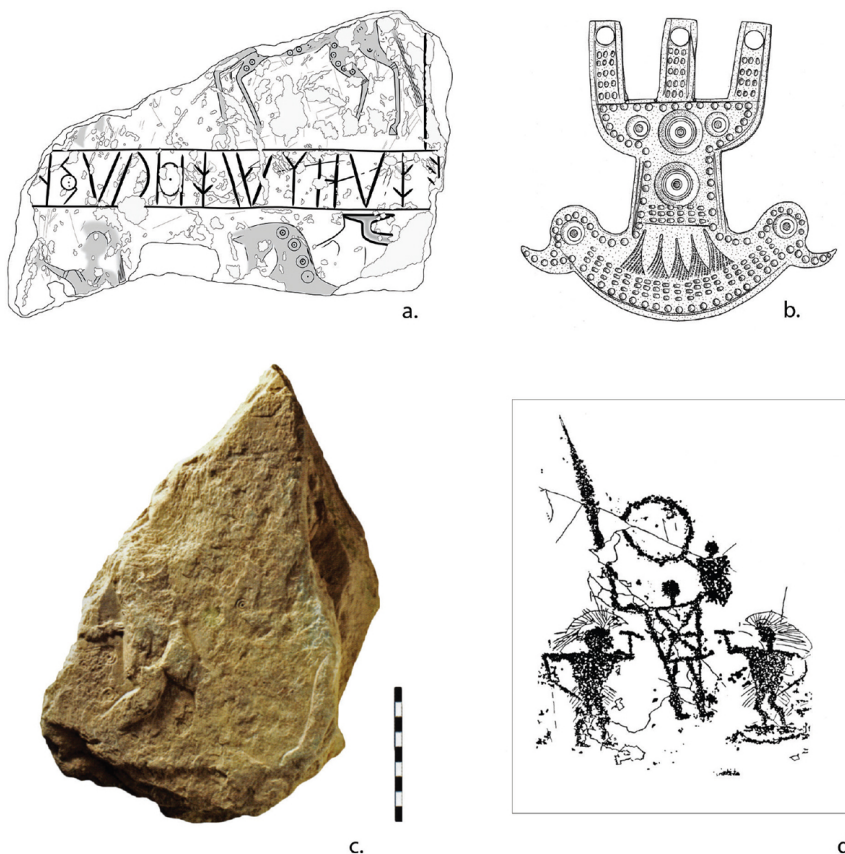


Fig. 9.2. Decorated artefacts from Valcamonica and comparison with rock art: a. small slab from Cividate Camuno (max. width 38 cm). Drawing by the author, 2012 (courtesy of CaMus, Museo Camuno, Breno); b. pendant from Spinera, Breno (max. width 6 cm × max. height 6 cm) (after Rossi, 2005); c. fragment of bas-relief from Cemmo, Capo di Ponte (after Poggiani Keller 2009); d. duelling warriors, Naquane R. 50, Capo di Ponte (tracing 'Footstep of Man').

The second object is from the Minerva temple of *Spinéra* (Breno), a site discovered by chance in 1986 and completely excavated in recent years (Rossi 2010). It supplies fundamental information concerning the archaeology of Valcamonica during the second half of the Iron Age, especially regarding the persistence and evolution of local cults during the Roman period. The Roman temple, built at the beginning of the first century AD and remodelled under the Flavian dynasty, was erected on a previous site, used at least since the seventh century BC, where an anonymous female deity was worshipped through offerings and libations held in a large open-air sanctuary. The latter was supplied with altars and stone fences where fires were lit and animal offerings and vegetables were left.

A small and richly decorated bronze pendant was found in the prehistoric levels (Fig. 9.2b), and was clearly given as a precious gift. It shows a human figure with arms raised upwards emerging from a curved shaped object (a boat?) with bird

heads at opposite ends (Rossi and Miazzo 2005), both being well-known motives from local rock art sites around Capo di Ponte, approximately 15 km north from Breno. The bronze surface is enriched with ‘occhi di dado’ and other punched decorations. This image is similar to other pendants showing a possible feminine deity found among Veneti and Raeti tribes (Marzatico 2001), and maybe the indigenous form of a divine entity similar to the Roman Minerva that replaced it. If compared to the rock art areas, the Spinera find belongs to a different type of site called a *brandopferplatz*²⁷ and is crafted in bronze and not stone, a fact that has fundamental consequences for its function and portability, and that led the ancient artisan to specific formal results. It is interesting here to note the importance of the same aquatic bird images which are already well attested within the rock art tradition (see below). In-depth analysis of the etching technique which was used to manufacture the tiny bronze ornament further points toward production by indigenous artisans (Miazzo 2005).

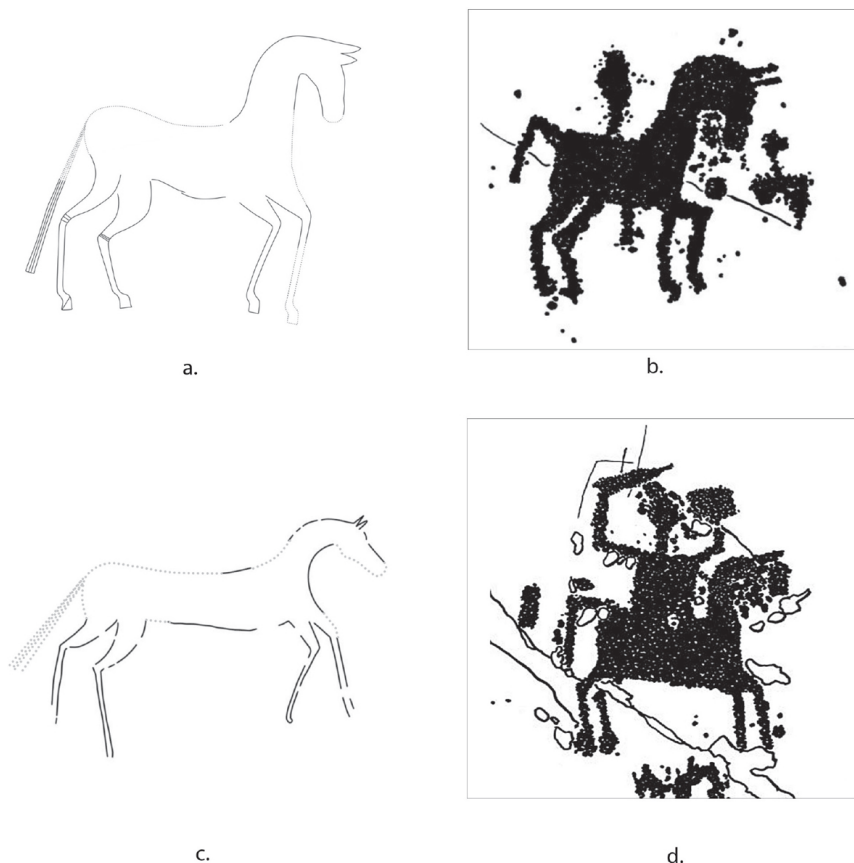


Fig. 9.3. a. Reconstruction of horse figure from Cividate Camuno slab; b. Bedolina, R. 5, Capo di Ponte; c. Pià d'Ort, R. 24, Sello (drawing after Sansoni and Gavaldo 1995); d. Seradina III, R. 18, Capo di Ponte.

The third artefact was found during the excavation project at Cemmo, conducted from 2000 to 2011 by the Antiquity Office of Lombardy, which has brought to light the structure of a complex and long-lasting ceremonial site composed of a semi-circular dry stone wall just in front of the two well-known carved boulders, Cemmo n. 1 and n. 2 (Poggiani Keller and Ruggiero 2009; Poggiani Keller 2002; 2000). Excavation data suggest that the wall was built in the Early Bronze Age and that people used the site and restored the wall during the Iron Age, lasting well into Roman times. Aside from examples known from previous investigations (Casini 1994), a number of standing statue-menhir were erected nearby the wall and the boulders. All are carved with the characteristic Copper Age imagery: solar signs, weapons, animals, ploughing scenes, garments. A lot of these stones survive in fragments, but this nonetheless brings the total number of decorated monuments found so far in Cemmo to well over 20. The site was apparently abandoned in the fourth–fifth century AD, when the progressive introduction of the Christian religion led to the foundation of a new sacred site in the nearby Pieve di San Siro.

Of significance for this research is the discovery of a stone bas-relief (Fig. 9.2c), unfortunately heavily fragmented and weathered, depicting what is supposed to be the remains of a fighting scene between two warriors, one of which is armed with sword and shield (?) (Poggiani Keller 2009).⁸ The best preserved figure is on the left: the man, missing his entire torso and head and part of the arms, wears a skirt and holds a short sword just above the hip and across his body in order to stab the opponent, who appears on the right edge and is recognized solely by his leg. Many '*occhi di dado*' are visible on the surface. The existing portion of the frieze is considered to be of Roman phase by the excavator, and was perhaps part of a commemorative monument or an altar. It can be compared with the hundreds of duels depicted on the rocks during the Iron Age, for example the many duelling scenes carved in Naquane (Fig. 9.2d) or Paspardo (Fossati 2007b). In fact, it shows close similarities with the graphic conventions used in rock art to portray the human body, and includes the characteristic short skirt (see for example Naquane R. 50; see also Campanine R. 62 below) and sword in stabbing position.

Are these the final proof of the local production of objects beyond rock art? Of course this is a predictable outcome, but the archaeology of Valcamonica had not highlighted it until now. It is therefore reasonable to expect a coexistence, inside the same local communities, of people etching bronze plates or sculpting stone and people carving the rocks. Can we trace any connections between the two? Before examining this issue let us see what other striking similarities exist in graphic themes outside Valcamonica and what they reveal about this supposed relationship.

Trading formal styles and symbolic themes

Graphical and ideological borrowing (or exchanges?) from outside can be recognised when comparing rock art from Valcamonica and the two main decorative traditions that spread in the Alps during the Iron Age: the classic situla art of Etruscan genesis, mainly from the eastern Alps (AA.VV. 1961; Capuis 2001), and the Hallstatt-Golasecca variant, which is found mainly in the western Alps and central Europe. When comparing these two strong graphic traditions to rock art

from Valcamonica one thing becomes apparent: many *themes* seem to come from the classic situla art of the eastern Alps, but actual *graphic forms* instead appear to derive from the western variant, resulting in a mixing between a figurative programme of ultimately Etruscan/Italic origin and the lively tradition of graphic shapes and techniques rooted in the core of Bronze Age Europe craftsmanship.

Born in the Orientalising climate of Bologna (Torelli 1997), the classic situla art, which is characterised by its bas-relief figures created by hammering the reverse of a bronze sheet, became widely adopted in the Venetic/Rhaetic areas and in territories of modern Slovenia around the sixth century BC. Situla art typically features scenes of social life, military and religious processions, athletic competitions (boxing, chariot racing), ceremonies involving wine consumption tools (vessels, cups), animal sacrifice, hunting, ploughing and ritual sex. The rock carvers more-or-less copied several aspects: the boxers of Foppe di Nadro R. 6 (Anati 1982), the scene featuring people around a 'throne' inside a large hut of Campanine R. 7 (Sansoni and Gavaldo 2009) and the hunting, ploughing and erotic scenes of Seradina I R. 12.⁹ However, there are cases where they did not simply slavishly imitate the images with which they came in contact. Rather, they constantly reworked them according to a precise, original logic that was linked to the medium being used, in this case the rock surface, and to a strongly rooted local cultural tradition.

The western variant instead has its production core in the Golasecca area, where the fertile meeting of ideas coming from the Mediterranean and from central Europe lead to some of the most striking art masterpieces of European prehistory (De Marinis 2000). In this region, inhabited by a people of Celtic language but strongly influenced by the powerful Etruscan current coming from the south, the situla art took unique forms and styles and developed a reduced range of topics compared to the eastern trend. The best known examples of this art are from Ca' Morta, Sesto Calende (Biondelli 1867; De Marinis 2009) and Trezzo d'Adda (De Marinis 1974). Other examples can be seen in the decoration of some bronze belts from the Ticino area (De Marinis and Biaggio Simona 2000), as well as the Iron Age bronze hoards found at Fließ in Tyrol (Sydow 1995) and Most na Soči, Slovenia. To this we must add the noteworthy frieze of the bronze couch from the princely grave of Hochdorf (Biel *et al.* 1985), which has been attributed with high probability to Golasecca craftsmen (De Marinis 2000). Comparisons with some figures from Valcamonica are indeed remarkable.¹⁰ In particular, images of horses from Foppe di Nadro (R. 6, R. 27), Campanine (R. 57) and Naquane (R. 47, R. 57) refer to the same Golasecca type: the animals are drawn with a simple sinuous contour line, leaving a characteristic open gap between the rear legs (Fig. 9.4). A recent discovery from Bedolina again shows the same graphic idea, this time applied to a deer and its chasing dog (Fig. 9.4f). At the same time, the four-wheeled wagon etched on the Hochdorf couch (Fig. 9.4g) is almost identical, in structure and perspective choice, to the wagons visible on a few rocks at Naquane (Van Berg-Osterrieth 1972) (Fig. 9.4i). The fighting couples are closely comparable to images from Valcamonica in the type of skirt, peculiar headdress and shields and the posture of the bodies. Here, it is interesting to note that of the many possible ways to draw the animals, the rock carvers deliberately chose a form that has its origin in bronze decoration, thus marking a precise connection with a graphic trend that was already well-developed in a different medium.

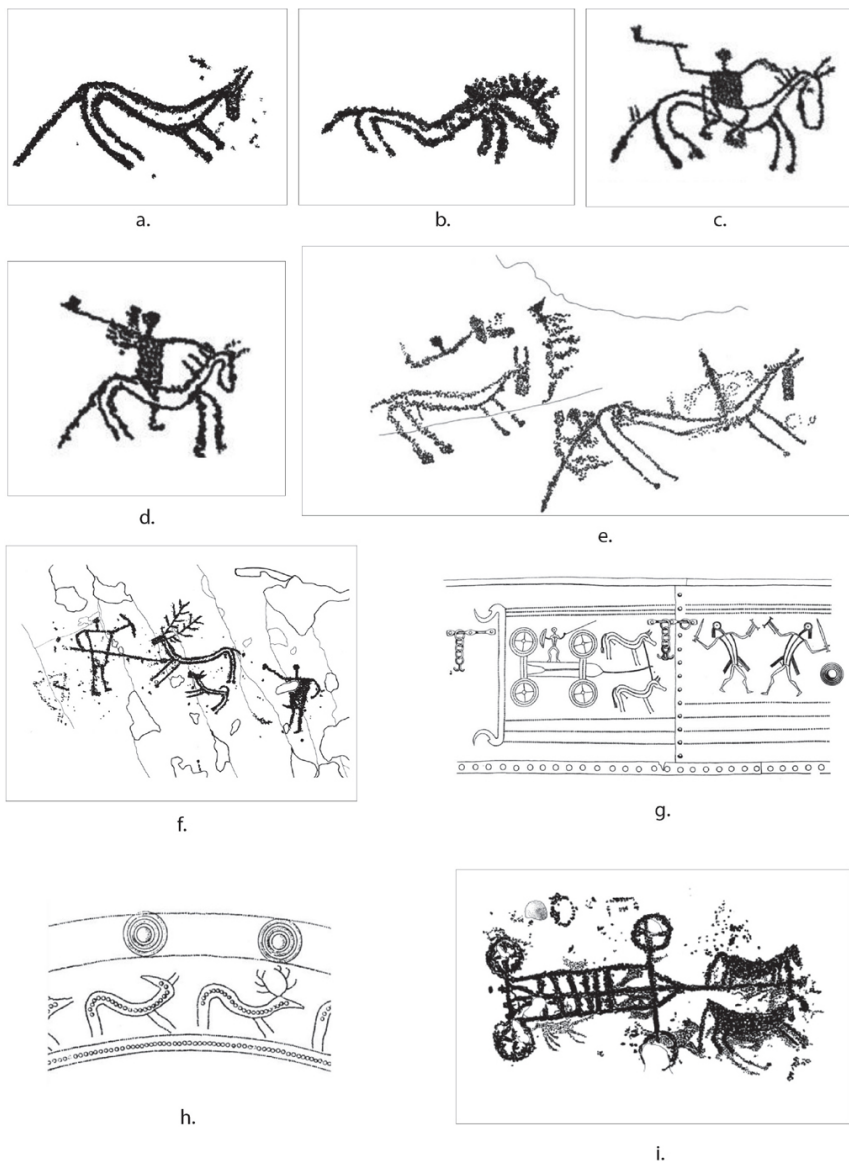
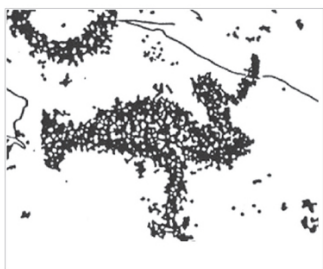


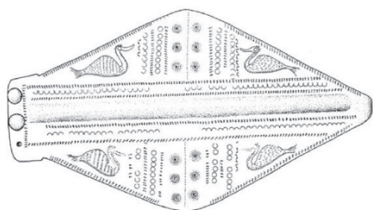
Fig. 9.4. a, b, e. Foppe di Nadro R. 27, Ceto (fig. e after Anati 1982); c. Foppe di Nadro R. 6, Ceto; d. Naquane R. 2, Capo di Ponte; f. Bedolina, R. 28, Capo di Ponte; g. decoration of the Hochdorf kline, detail (after Biel et al. 1985); h. Situla di Trezzo, detail (after De Marinis 1974); i. four-wheeled wagon from Naquane R. 23, Capo di Ponte (after Van Berg-Osterrieth 1972).



a.



b.



c.



d.



e.



f.



g.

Fig. 9.5. a, b. aquatic bird and boat with bird heads carrying inscriptions, Naquane R. 50, Capo di Ponte (tracing 'Footstep of Man'); c. bronze belt from Tirano, Valtellina (after Poggiani Keller 1989); d, e. detail of aquatic birds on bronze belt from Giubiasco and Cerinasca d'Arbedo, Switzerland (drawing after De Marinis and Biaggio Simona 2000); f. detail of bronze belt from Fließ, Tyrol (Austria) (after Sydow 1995); g. warrior standing on incomplete sun boat (only one bird head was carved) from Pagherina R. 5, Capo di Ponte.

Echoes from the western Alps are also recognizable in the carved images of aquatic birds (Fig. 9.5), especially when the features of the animal family, such as the upward beak, the short and gawky legs and the wide tail, are clearly depicted (Naquane R. 50, Naquane R. 1, I Verdi R. 7 and, partially, Campanine R. 62). Aside from the recently unearthed pendant from Spinera, the closest examples can be found on bronze belts from Giubiasco and Cerinasca d'Arbedo in Ticino (De Marinis and Biaggio Simona 2000), from Tirano in Valtellina (Poggiani Keller 1989) and again from Fließ in Tyrol (Sydow 1995).

Artisans and rock art makers: overlapping tasks?

There is no doubt that the very act of carving a rock to create an image implies the acquisition and application of a precise technique (Priuli 2001). The many awkward modern attempts to vandalise the rocks are proof enough that you cannot easily copy the pecking methods used in the past, which involved the use of a specific hammering object, a suitable angle and strength of percussion and a proper intensification of pecking to create the fine texture that is often seen inside the figures. Drawing rules are well coded as well, since the possibilities of foreshortening the human or the animal body are, for example, very limited by the media used (Chippindale and Baker 2012). It is not possible in fact to carve a line into a pecked area and make it clearly visible,¹¹ a device that was used in Greek vase painting during the sixth century BC to solve the foreshortening problem. As a consequence the system of depiction that developed in Valcamonica adopted the multi-view solution which, in John Willats' terms, can be described as 'horizontal oblique projection' and 'vertical oblique projection' (Willats 1997).

What we observe is that there was actually a sphere of manual activity that would have been familiar with almost all of the same tools and devices: hammers, chisels and punches of different sizes and shapes; images crafted through hammering a surface instead of embossing it from the back;¹² preference for shapes made just with contour lines and modular decorations created by the repetition of various 'point and line' elements. Furthermore we have seen that there is strong evidence of the presence in Valcamonica itself of artisans devoted to the decoration of bronze or stone artefacts with the same etching technique that is encountered in the western Alps and Hallstatt regions in particular. Is this enough to support the existence of a close relationship between the rock carvers and probable local bronze artisans? Two other elements point decisively again toward the same idea: the expertise with special carving compasses, manifest in the omnipresent '*occhio di dado*' ornament, and the adoption of linear arrangements of figures as in bronze friezes.

In Valcamonica rock art perfect circles are not as rare as one might imagine. In fact, many rocks show on their flatter portions one or more scratched concentric circle produced using some sort of compass tool rotating around a central point. The centre point is usually recognizable in the form of a perfectly hemispherical small hole. So far, no explanation has been advanced about the exact tool employed to scratch them and, of course, about their mysterious purpose. Nonetheless it seems important to note, for the scope of the present research, that a compass was part of the everyday work carried out by bronze and stone artisans (Miazzo 2005), thus offering another hint about a possible shared toolset between

rock carvers and craft artisans.

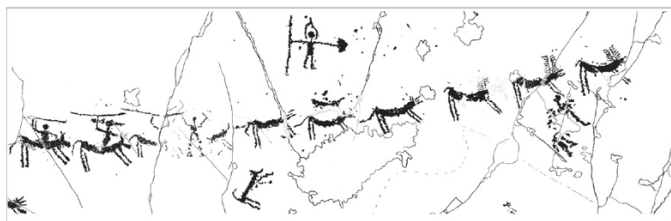
Another striking feature, which seems to suggest a direct intervention on the rocks by an artist educated in the bronze etching discipline, comes from the unique arrangements of figures, which are sometimes called 'processions', that are found along with hundreds of other images on Seradina I, R. 12. Here a particular author, possibly identifiable as a local 'master', constantly repeated a pattern where horizontal sequences of the same figures (horseman, dog, deer, bird) are characterised by heavily abstracted elements – 'solar' antlers for the deer, curly tail and open mouth with tongue for the dog, straight 90° degree connected segments for the highly stylised aquatic birds. These processions sometimes use the natural long glacial scratching as an existing guideline for the lining up of the bodies (Fig. 9.6). This composition is rare on carved rocks, where the usual logic is instead to use the surface as a canvas for 'fluctuating' images. On the other hand linear arrangements in horizontal registers are common in vase painting, bronze vessels or even stone materials.



a.



b.



c.

Fig. 9.6. a–c. panels from Seradina I R. 12 (Capo di Ponte) showing sequences of ‘cloned’ animals and the use of natural scratching to arrange figures in horizontal registers.

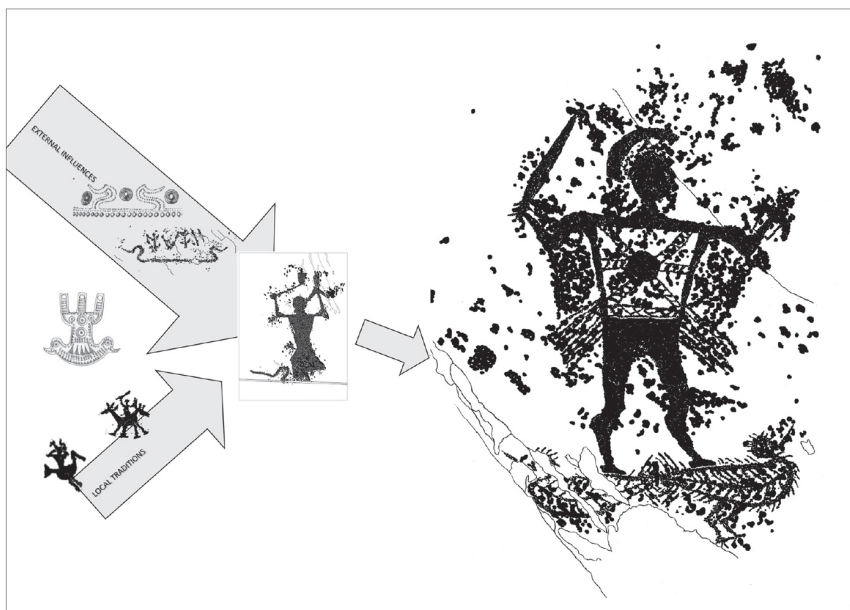


Fig. 9.7. Mixing local traditions and external influences: the 'heroic' figure of Campanine R. 62, Cimbergo.

Local identities and external traits merged together by informed artists/artisans

The representation of aquatic birds on the rocks represents a high prestige, symbolic intentionality, since this type of bird mediated between the celestial spheres, i.e. the earth and the ground water. As we have seen, the shapes of these kinds of birds, in particular the ducks, are closely comparable to similar representations from bronze artefacts from Valcamonica itself, or the Alps in general. A strong and undoubtedly original trait is found in some exceptional cases when they become magical mounts for armed figures (Campanine R. 62) or are stylized into the classic boat with schematic bird heads, and in this form become the symbolic vehicle for short inscriptions in the local pre-Roman alphabet (Naquane R. 50, boulder of Grevo and stele of Tresivio, Valtellina). Here, the bird takes the predictable role of companion to the soul in the afterlife, an idea that evidently originates from the sun boat and the chariot of the sun mythology of Bronze Age Europe (Kristiansen 2010; Kaul 1998). The same idea, accepted and transformed by Italic peoples during the Early Iron Age, presents qualities more prone toward the funerary idea of the travel of the dead. In this sense it accompanies most of the burial furnishings of the time, as largely evidenced by the decoration of precious objects found inside tombs of the Early Iron Age in Etruria, the Piceni and Veneti areas or the Alps (Iaia 2004). The sun boat with bird heads unmistakably reveals the diffusion of the same graphic theme among almost all the Italic élites of the time. However, it is likely that in Valcamonica aquatic birds already had a native and well-rooted symbolism, and for this reason rock carvers

did not have any difficulty in accepting and incorporating the external elements that were well-suited to the local cultural framework. The indisputable indigenous peculiarity is in fact to be recognised in the occurrence of wading-birds on Campanine R. 49 and neighbouring rocks, which is probably a site-specific feature that alludes to mythological narratives or animal deities (Marretta 2007).

The very acceptance of the theme of the sun boat with the bird heads reached an unexpected outcome in the case of the warrior of Campanine R. 62 (Fig. 9.7, right). Particularly significant here is the vibrancy of the local *interpretatio* in respect of a graphic symbol which, in the final stages of the Iron Age of neighbouring areas, is almost frozen in its ancient form, or even in the process of disappearing (De Marinis 1999). The boat, a magic vehicle that owes its power to the evocation of aquatic birds, is in fact reversed and turned into two actual detailed birds, in a sort of graphic paraphrase that alludes to an heroic (or even divine?) journey. This is confirmed by the rich clothing of the warrior: crested helmet, short sword and small shield, peculiar round breastplate hanging on what seems to be leather stripes,¹³ belt and skirt.

The intermediate stage between the boat and the pair of aquatic birds, both in terms of graphic structure and meaning, comes from an armed figure standing on half of an aquatic bird boat which was recently documented at Pagherina R. 5. The warrior, armed with an axe and a small oval shield,¹⁴ provides the key element to connect the various forms that the journey into afterlife assumes in the rock art of Valcamonica from the Early Iron Age. On the one hand, there is an 'international' aspect, represented by the pan-European solar boat but characterised by the peculiar presence of carried scripts, and on the other hand a more explicit indigenous dimension, where the elements are not abstractions but instead the actual protagonists in their everyday form. Finally, it should be noted that the very idea of real birds carrying human beings is to be found again and only in Campanine R. 49 and R. 47 (Sansoni and Gavaldo 2009). Since these two cases depict wading-birds as vehicles, the indigenous origin of the theme is strongly reinforced.

Conclusion

Generalisation is, of course, a bad habit. In fact, there is no doubt that the majority of rock art from Valcamonica, which includes an extremely rich typology of figures, cannot be reduced to a unique and all-encompassing explanation. Making rock art was likely to have been an everyday activity carried out on distinct occasions by different individuals over the centuries, a fact that can even support the idea of some figures or entire panels having been engraved by shepherds along their paths to pastures as stated by Alexander (2012).

Yet some specific features stand out: the sophisticated metamorphosis of the sun boat theme into an explicit 'natural' form (Campanine R. 62) and the conscious use in rock art of graphic symbols from precious objects whose use was restricted to élites (i.e. the horses and birds as seen on bronze artefacts). These point towards a group of individuals able to conduct a sort of cultural 'translation' between graphic symbols or subjects of different geographical provenance or, at least, pertaining to different media. The celebrated institution of the sun boat, dating back centuries as one of the most powerful religious ideas in the Bronze Age in central and northern

Europe, and its coupling with inscriptions in the local alphabet, is another clue of distinctiveness among the small and sparse prehistoric communities living in Valcamonica (Alexander 2012). Further evidence suggests that specific knowledge was in the possession of a few individuals who were not only trained in local mythology and legendary narratives, but also had competence in alphabet adaptation and writing. This mediating role played by a subset of the community shows that strong common ideas found diffusion into almost every media, including rock art, as far as they fit into the equally strong native cultural traits. In Valcamonica these seem to be wholly dominated by rock art, which is unquestionably the favoured expressive media of the area.

If this is not enough to exclude the everyday person from the production of highly sophisticated imagery, then there is another element to consider: the likeness of tools and graphic symbols used by bronze or stone artisans and rock carvers during their artistic activity. Hammering a surface with scalpels and chisels to create images was a shared technical framework, and conceiving similar shapes was an obvious outcome as far as the artist was not trained to also create in different techniques, like vase painting. If not the same person, there is today evidence to support an effective relationship between local manufacturers of precious objects and the still mysterious rock art makers.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

- 1 This is a relative new trend in studies dealing with rock art from Valcamonica, and has been discussed with slightly different approaches in recent years (Sansoni and Marretta 2002; Fossati 2011).
- 2 A sort of blind trust in the possibility of actually ‘decoding’ or ‘reading’ rock art in order to grasp the very messages embedded into it has dominated a section of research in Valcamonica in recent years (Anati 2007).
- 3 Regarding the most refined carvings of the Iron Age, it is common sense to consider them as having been made using metal tools, although there is no specific study on this topic to date.
- 4 With the only exception being the Dos dell’Arca site, which, unfortunately, was never published in full by the excavator. For a brief account of the site see Anati (1968).
- 5 Starting with the very first published papers, like Battaglia (1934), this approach is ubiquitous in Valcamonica rock art studies. See for example Anati (1960) and De Marinis (1994).
- 6 The ‘*occhio di dado*’ – ‘eye of the dice’ in English – is a widespread decorative motif with a long tradition; it consists of a small central punch and two or more concentric circles. To carve it into hard materials (bronze, stone) and obtain perfect circles a special tool was employed, a ‘*trapano a compasso*’ or ‘drill compass’ (Miazzo 2005).
- 7 The term refers to peculiar sites, common in the eastern Alps and part of the ancient Venetic territories, characterised by the remains of big fires, which

often lasted for centuries through the Iron Age and Roman times, lit to burn various offerings (parts of sacrificed animals, bronze ornaments, weapons and, in later times, coins). The discovery of an analogous site in Valcamonica is an exciting novelty. For an overview of the *Brandopferplatz* phenomenon in the Alps see Zemmer-Plank and Sölder (2002). The existence at the Le Sante site (Capo di Ponte) of a second *Brandopferplatz* has recently been conjectured by Solano (2007).

- 8 A very similar bas-relief is known from Bormio. See Mariotti (1999) for a new analysis and earlier bibliography.
- 9 The identical composition of themes can be found on the situla of Sanzeno, Trentino (Marzatico 2001). The proximity of concepts and of graphic arrangement between some panels of Seradina I R. 12 and situla art decisively point to a rock carver well acknowledged in 'mainstream' decoration of precious objects circulating in northern Italy between the sixth and the fourth centuries BC.
- 10 The first scholar to note this resemblance was Raffaele de Marinis in his seminal work of 1988 about the ethnic position of the *Camunni* alongside the other Alpine tribes of late prehistory (De Marinis 1988).
- 11 This usually happens in superimpositions, i.e. when figures overlap each other. The difficulty in solving the order of overlapping, very clear in the contradictory chronologies that exist for some specific topics, should not be treated cursorily. Exemplary are the most recent – and quite diverging – opinions regarding the praying figures (Gavaldo and Sansoni 2009; Arcà 2001).
- 12 Obviously, this option would not have been available for stone pieces, but refers just to bronze foil.
- 13 The presence of a *kardyophylax* is a remarkable feature of the image, since this defensive piece of armour is representative of central Italic people, especially the Piceni tribes, and no occurrences was known in the Alps until recently. In fact, a small fragment of *kardyophylax* of Italic manufacture has been identified among the many bronze pieces of the Fließ hoard (Tomedi 1994), where other elements, as we demonstrated, connect to Valcamonica as well.
- 14 The figure is heavily disturbed by large later peckings, as seen in Campanine R. 62.

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Carl Georg Brunius: An early nineteenth-century pioneer in Swedish petroglyph research

Jarl Nordbladh

Despite the existence of the earliest known Scandinavian documents from around AD 1627, a significant body of archaeological research on petroglyphs did not develop until the last decade of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. It was in this period that Carl Georg Brunius was active, and became a prominent personality with an influence on contemporary colleagues at a time when professional archaeologists were very few.

This paper touches on the social conditions of academic and antiquarian archaeology, which questions were asked, which answers were preferred and how the Scandinavian petroglyph material was linked to similar categories in other areas of the world.

Brunius is remarkable for several reasons, but his work on rock art may be regarded as less important compared with what he accomplished in ancient Latin and Greek at the Lund Academy, and his more lasting endeavour of building and rebuilding churches, castles and even farms in medieval styles. Regarding his rock art studies, there are two focal points of interest: the very high and reflexive quality of his field documents (1815–1817; 1838) and the nature of his interpretative arguments.

KEYWORDS: petroglyphs, rock carvings, rock art, history of research, the Nordic Bronze Age, documentation

Introduction

The history of archaeology is largely still to be written, or more specifically, histories are waiting to be put together, from a whole range of perspectives. This is

a most necessary task to be undertaken – in an analytical and critical way – to provide archaeologists with a well-founded selfconsciousness of their scientific discipline.

In what sort of social and political situations does a scientific archaeology appear? Is there only one general archaeological formation process to identify, and are there different references and objectives?

Of course it is possible to criticise or dismiss the older antiquarian research efforts and argue that they are without scientific merit and long forgotten, the only documents of interest being those recording sites that are now destroyed or which have disappeared. However, I think this would be a narrow-minded view for many reasons, not least because it presupposes that documents have an existence of their own, without connections to specific points in time and intellectual activities. In addition, it demonstrates a sort of ignorance towards the work and working conditions of colleagues in bygone days.

With this perspective in mind, I would like to call attention to one major research personality, who is not very well known today and is rarely used as a reference, namely Carl Georg Brunius. The time is the beginning of the nineteenth century, when petroglyphs were just given recognition as a valuable prehistoric source material, and when a professional archaeology in terms of institutions and positions was to be formed. The attraction to rock art was due to the relationship between picture and text, a possible pair, which might provide a starting point for interpretations.

The oldest documents

The earliest documentation of petroglyphs known in Scandinavia is almost 200 years older than Brunius' field campaigns, from the county of Bohuslän, located on the western coast of Sweden. The area at that time actually belonged to Norway, and Norway in turn was linked to Denmark. These documents, which are in Copenhagen, are remarkable because they are still accessible and legible; fortunately, they escaped several wars and great fires, and remain in good condition. The existence of the water-coloured pictures and accompanying Latin text from 1627 is due to a very deliberate and well organised survey of ancient monuments in Denmark at that time. The poly-historian and museum-founder, Ole Worm, had questionnaires sent out to all the provinces in 1622, mainly to priests, who were the largest educated sector of society (Schepelehn 1971). The instructions were very well-formulated and are still of current interest. The investigator was instructed to note particular details: the place, county and parish; the setting and compass direction of the monument; the format such as length, width and thickness; draw the ancient monument and indicate how it was constructed; interpretation; the meaning of the monument as given by the local population, including Sagas; remarkable events around the site or other observations to strengthen the mission (Randsborg 1994).

The surveyor of south-eastern Norway, a schoolmaster in Oslo named Petrus Adolphus (Peder Alfssön), had no concept of a prehistoric period to assign the images to (Moltke 1956). Before the first part of the nineteenth century scholars combined both prehistoric times as well as the Catholic era of the Middle Ages into the vague concept of the 'Saga-time'. Adolphus thought that the petroglyphs were

graffiti made by medieval church-builders during their leisure hours. However, he found the carved rocks remarkable and worth copying. The documents were forgotten in the Worm archives, not to be published until almost 150 years later (Suhm 1784). So, these documents are very old indeed, but they have not had any direct impact on the development of petroglyph research. Maybe they were collected too early to be analysed as archaeological matter?

From Enlightenment to Romanticism

The seventeenth century is the 'presentation era' of Scandinavian ancient monuments to the learned European academic world. This is largely combined with the introduction in Europe of the old Icelandic Sagas, which were seen as the 'Classical' texts of this part of the world. In this way, a literary concept of ancient times was established and prehistoric monuments and objects were given mainly illustrative tasks. The academic problem was the one of historical situations and localisation of places mentioned in the texts, and often the identification of historical personalities (Jensen 2002).

The antiquarian work was basically centralised, governed by the crown, and the main purpose of the activities was – by patriotic arguments – to gain fame and prestige for the nations involved. The communications were, if published, in Latin. Eventually quite a few learned persons were engaged in making inventories, but these were related more to information collecting, often at vicarages and councils of village communities, and not to actual landscape investigation and autopsy. The scholars found it difficult to get out of their libraries.

Archaeology eventually became competitive, full of prestige, and sometimes forgeries occurred. After a while a stagnation in knowledge and argumentation was seen. In foreign countries – seen as the main audience of these learned presentations – and also with a rising disaffection at home, the publications were criticised as mere propaganda. Furthermore, the antiquarian as a personality became a ridiculous figure, a character to mock. There were much more important and useful pursuits to be undertaken, it was said, than to look for and collect old things.

Parallel to this rather complicated situation, with an archaeology founded on literary sources, there existed an interest in ancient monuments and objects per se, guided more on the premises of the Age of Enlightenment. As a consequence of vast rural administrative land reforms great numbers of antiquities were found in the earth, and these objects were appropriated and given a new purpose in – mostly – private collections. The trade in objects and documents became commonplace. Even if archaeological excavations were undertaken in northern Europe since the sixteenth century, they produced very little in terms of suitable pieces for collections (Baudou 2004; Molin 2003).

At the end of the eighteenth century elaborate works on the systematisation and classification of the ancient objects and monuments appeared, where consideration was given more to the properties of the material and to a lesser degree to what the old literature had to say. Remarkably, this coincided with a time in which new ideas about human life and history were flowing, later called the Romantic Era. Archaeology had a new motivation with arguments largely taken from the source material itself: the monuments – especially the impressive ones – should be taken

care of not so much as archives for excavation in the future but as historical relics and part of the picturesque landscape.

This was also reflected in the arts, where the monuments became the ideal inspiration for contemplation. There was evidently an element of veneration introduced in society. The maintenance of the nation's ancient treasures became a sort of citizen's movement formed and supported with great enthusiasm by the growing bourgeoisie. This nationalism was more directed to supporting a sense of internal community than for international prestige purposes. Nordic or Scandinavian solidarity was seen as historically more important than the single nation.

Along with several general accounts of antiquities, carried out with the help of the clergymen, more professional antiquarians began to survey the different parts of the country in order to make an inventory of the monuments and objects, monitor their conditions in terms of needed protection and also to try to define the special characteristics of the provinces: what could be found in what kind of topographical situation? By this the antiquarians also contributed to a sense of regions or home districts, defined in terms other than administrative ones. The nation also became a concept as a social and psychological entity. The Germanic tribe of the Goths was chosen as a suitable folk-historical origin and foundation (Janson 2013).

Publishing companies expanded along with the growing intellectual society, and for Sweden the main publishing houses were no longer in the university towns of Lund and Uppsala, but in the capital of Stockholm and in some towns in the provinces, like Örebro. A broader book-market was developing. Latin was abandoned as the general academic language and Swedish became more common. The growing natural sciences led the way, being more radical politically and with an ambition to reach out to readers who were not a product of the academies. First French was used, and later German, perhaps as a consequence of the new world of scientific congresses? Only recently has English emerged as the main foreign academic language in archaeological publications in Scandinavia – a development resulting from the world situation after the Second World War.

Archaeology in the Nordic and Classical worlds

It is necessary to point out that the evolving discipline of archaeology in the Nordic countries is not a totally local or regional affair. Very strong influences came from the studies of Classical languages on the continent, and Nordic scholars often had direct contacts with colleagues, collectors and academies in e.g. France, England and Italy. The influential antiquarian Comte de Caylus made Swedish friends.

There are several reasons for this, some of them more political than academic. Sweden took part in the growing European interests in the Orient and North Africa after the beginning of the eighteenth century. Diplomatic services were established and scientific expeditions were organised. Italy and Greece became coveted destinations for travels of the royal families, the nobility, the wealthy middle class – and artists. Mediterranean antiquities and casts were brought to Scandinavia with increasing frequency. Impressive cities like Rome and Pompeii and Herculaneum as well as monuments such as Stonehenge were visited and became

natural reference points in conversation and in the illustrated art. Of course the excavations in southern Italy awoke great interest and the comprehensive publications of monuments and objects – principally in the field of numismatics – of the Classical world gave inspiration to the Nordic archaeology. The developments of these different archaeologies were also similar regarding the traditional impact of the literary sources and the beginning statements of the independent source-value of the physical remains.

The closeness between the Nordic and the Classical worlds can – symbolically – be seen in the discovery in 1799 by a travelling Swedish scholar of the runic inscription on the body of the Piraeus marble lion, which had been removed to Venice a century earlier (Åkerblad 1804).

Carl Georg Brunius and his background

The best introduction to Brunius is written by the art historian Bo Grandin, where he is seen as a pioneer in medieval architectural history. The chapter on rock art is very readable and interesting (Grandin 1974). There is also a very rich body of archival material, mainly in the Antiquarian-Topographical Archives at the National Board of Antiquities in Stockholm. Brunius' manuscripts were arranged by a relative and sold to the archive. For the rock art, the pagination of the documents must be an amalgamation of several strategies for publication, where finally, in 1868, just a few of the field documents were reworked (in a less suitable way) to fit the book. In total, there are between 65 and 100 sites with commentaries, and the 65 sites of the original survey from 1815–1817 were supplemented in 1838.

Carl Georg Brunius was born in the parsonage of Tanum, in western Sweden, in 1792. From an early age, Brunius' father, Gomer, had been a priest on a ship in the service of the Swedish Oriental Company, and made three visits to China. He was a typical product of the Enlightenment Era, where the practical good was the guiding principle. He developed, among other things, agriculture, horticulture and house-building in his parishes, and Carl Georg and his twelve brothers and sisters were brought up in this active atmosphere. The father was also interested in antiquities and had a little collection of his own. The Tanum area of Bohuslän is extremely rich in ancient monuments, and even the family home was directly surrounded by e.g. different kinds of prehistoric graves. So, from the beginning, Carl Georg had a very close connection to this kind of material.

At the academies of Uppsala and Lund, later called universities, he studied a wide range of subjects, as was the standard of that time, but his particular interest was in Classical languages. In addition, he was taught modern English, French, Italian and Spanish at home, by his father. Another home teacher was Anton Lidberg, who later became an excavator of the mound at Lilla Jored, near his vicarage in Kville parish.

In 1815 the young Brunius was elected as unpaid reader in Greek. Before he finally got a paid position at the Lund academy in 1824, he worked as a private tutor in Stockholm. During the summer terms of 1815–1817 he made surveys and documents of rock-carvings in his childhood countryside and, in 1816, he also took part in the excavation of a large cairn from the Bronze Age called 'Galgeröset' (Montelius 1877; Thordeman 1925) and a wooden chambered tomb from the

Middle Iron Age, all recorded with very detailed accounts.

Later on he also embarked upon a long series of journeys in southern Sweden, where a multitude of ancient places and monuments were visited, recorded and published. He used the new invention of lithography, which was less demanding for the illustrator, to transform the drawings into prints (Liljegren and Brunius 1819–1823). Together with Achatius Kahl, a colleague from the island of Ven (Nordbladh 2008), he published an account of his journeys as a travelling archaeologist, which was more popular and helped to spread a visually inspiring, closer connection to prehistoric remains (Brunius 1839). However, his work on ancient monuments was primarily confined to his early academic career. Somewhat surprisingly, from his position as a lifetime professor of Greek he worked more in other fields: he became the founder of medieval archaeology in Sweden and his all-embracing interest in medieval architecture also contributed to another activity: he became a successful architect within a medieval form tradition.

The fate of his engagement in the prehistoric images is rather depressing because his pioneering work was held up – for financial reasons – for 50 years. He transformed this manuscript in an attempt to keep the study up to date. In the meantime other scholars had presented publications in the same field, some of them his own pupils.

This delay has not been appreciated by later researchers, and the influence of Brunius on the study of rock art is greater, and above all earlier, than his published works at first indicate.

Brunius, together with personalities like Sven Nilsson and Christian Jürgensen Thomsen, had vast networks of colleagues and pupils who could consult them in archaeological matters. Their private collections and archives were used for demonstration, and in the case of Brunius, his rock art documents were well known in intellectual circles. There are examples where his documents have been compared with the carved stone blocks of the Kivik grave (Hildebrand 1937a: 297).

This influence is a consequence mainly of the collegial communication, typical of the earlier academic world, where admission to private libraries and archives, journeys, visits and letter-writing were important means to gain recognition, to put the finishing touches on one's argument and to gain support, particularly in an age before national or international congresses and a system of specialized journals were developed (Nordbladh 2009).

Brunius and the rock carvings

As noted above, older rock-carving documents existed before Brunius entered the picture (Nordbladh 2000). Now and then during the eighteenth century different sites are mentioned in the literature. In Bohuslän, for example, there is a letter from a superintendent of the Swedish–Norwegian border asking, in 1751, for an inventory to be started in the county. The following sentence is taken from the text:

‘In the parish of Tanum not far from the sea I have also visited a sloping rock, where a man with a spear in his hand is cut and about whom is said, that a Scottish commander had been killed in his flight during a military campaign and that the position of his dead

body was reproduced in the rock’.

However, the letter did not prompt a survey and the possible site of Litsleby had to wait for at least the antiquarian Hilfeling to become better known (Klinckowström 1874).

Carl Gustaf Gottfried Hilfeling (1740–1823) was staying at the Tanum parsonage in 1792, being the private antiquarian of the nobleman Pehr Tham (Nordbladh 1997; 2002; 2010; Bertilsson, this volume). The counties of Västergötland and Bohuslän were going to have a broad survey of their ancient monuments. For the category of rock carvings Hilfeling used a grid net for documentation, so that the figures could be recorded to scale. This was the first use of actual measurements of petroglyphs at about the same time as the Egyptian stone monuments with hieroglyphs were discovered in their location. Unfortunately the next step, i.e. to transform the measurements to a printed form, did not represent the rock art well, as copper engravings made the figures too linear, and gave them a two-dimensional appearance (Tham 1794; also Suhm 1784).

Brunius probably had not seen Hilfeling’s travel books when he started his own survey. Tham was a later acquaintance (Nordbladh 2008). From his childhood it is mentioned that he was talented at drawing, and in this combination of draughtsmanship and scholar he represented a united professionalism in the study of prehistory, which became a tradition until photography replaced drawn pictures. The invention of photography currently dates to 1827.

The study atmosphere at the Lund academy was probably most stimulating for a growing archaeological science. Lectures on prehistoric monuments and objects were given mainly by natural scientists, with a concentration on the physical properties of the material. The academy had a special archaeological museum from 1806, with the greatest prehistoric collection in Sweden at that time. Several of Brunius’ study companions became involved in prehistory. Magnus Bruzelius, who wrote the last archaeological thesis to be published in Latin in Sweden, in the year of 1816, was the one who recommended Brunius to have his own field survey, which he carried out during the three summers of 1815–1817.

From the start he looked upon the material as hieroglyphs, i.e. a sort of picture writing, but different. He refers to the runic calendar and the magic drums of the Lapps as arguments for the possibility that symbols could also be created in the northern countries, and not only within the populations of Ethiopia, Egypt, India, China and Mexico. The rock carvings might then be a remnant of a writing method based on figures and signs. He realised that the rock carvings were a category in their own right, not to be confused with the runic alphabet and the Viking Age stone pictures, which demanded another kind of reading.

This way of thinking was deepened in 1827 when the Swedish state antiquarian, Johan Gustaf Liljegren, addressed Jean François Champollion regarding a possible relationship between Egyptian hieroglyphs and rock art figures (Hildebrand 1937b).

Brunius’ *chef-d’oeuvre* was translated into French 1818, on behalf of the chancellor of the Lund academy, count Lars von Engeström, who himself was a collector and bibliophile. In Stockholm von Engeström had an extensive library and archive, which Brunius learnt to know and utilise during his stay in the capital. How Brunius’ French manuscript ended up among his own papers is not known, but a guess is that Brunius took them back, when he was one of the

collaborators to arrange the books and documents and write down the Count's life notes just before von Engeström's death in 1826. There were several attempts to publish the manuscript, but finally Brunius wrote a monograph on the interpretation of rock art, for which he also used the old, unpublished text (Brunius 1868). One year later he was dead.

The locational discussion in Brunius' work is very comprehensive, concentrating not only on the images themselves but just as much on the characteristics of the sites, the surrounding landscape and other types of ancient monuments located in the vicinity. The sites are said to be found along the coasts of Scandinavia, some kilometres from the present sea. The rocks chosen for reproduction are striking in their setting, smoothness and blackish surface, often with running water over it. This gives a better appearance to the figures, and the hard granite preserves the figures better against the negative effects of the air, he observes. Even different kinds of slopes are discussed.

Brunius was extremely meticulous in giving accounts of his working methods: careful and true observations create better conditions for interpretations, he proclaims. The site should be cleared from earth and mosses should be taken away. Running water should be diverted and the surface washed. The figures are traced by their contours or totally worked surface. It was recommended that faint figures that were difficult to identify should be visited several times. The observations were helped by low standing sun rays or – in the night – lanterns. The contours could be followed by the sensitive finger to separate natural cracks from artificial lines. The figures were best discerned in sunshine in the morning or in the afternoon just after a rainfall.

Brunius also observed the differences in condition of the figures, from almost totally vanished images to intact ones. For the drawing, a grid system was laid out over the rock surface and a corresponding grid paper was used for the figure transformation from rock to paper, all within a controlled scale (Fig. 10.1). The figures were drawn on the rock with a piece of chalk and on the paper with a lead pencil or ink. The deeper the figures, the darker they were coloured.



Fig. 10.1. Brunius' field documentation based on a grid system for scale reduction. Backa, Brastad sn, Bohuslän, Sweden, c. 1815–1817 (Antikvarisk Topografiska Arkivet (ATA), Riksantikvarieämbetet, Stockholm).

Concerning the age of the images, Brunius had several bright reflections. As the hieroglyphs he knew from the literature were older as a communication principle

than the alphabet, he reasoned that the rock images were older than the runic alphabet. But his main arguments were more like those of a natural scientist. As the sites nowadays are to be found far from the present sea, they must be very old – several thousands of years – if they once were cut at the seaside. The even rock surfaces were seen as a product of wave activity and he found that the landscape demonstrated several ancient beaches, and this was also indicated by shell-middens located very high in the landscape. As a sort of actualistic reasoning he refers to the activities of the present sea to understand the fossil situations. Weathering processes were also used as an indication of great age, with comparison to decorated Egyptian obelisks, where very old engravings can be very little affected. Here he refers to Kircher's famous work (1676).

Finally, Brunius concluded that the fact that the images are not mentioned in the Icelandic Sagas demonstrates that they are older.

The discussions about the location and the dating are well organized. But, the interpretation, from a current point of view, is rather chaotic. Brunius' general opinion of the images is that they were executed for memorial reasons as a sort of picture writing. He sees some primary motifs repeated, such as different forms of fighting and embarkation, and also less antagonistic customs are presented, such as gymnastic acts and loving situations. He often goes into detail and narrative stories are created, with iconic symbols, such as a hare stands for cowardice and a bird for a prophecy, a snake for malicious devices or a sudden death.

The support he needs for his interpretations is taken from Classical writers who have discussed Thule, such as Tacitus and Pytheas. The Icelandic literature is only used to show the customs of a very old tradition. There is nothing in his writing about ancient heroes or a glorious past. He uses a few ethnographical comparisons, e.g. the rock carving boats. He laments the absence of suitable research projects and publications as guiding inspirations for his own studies.

It has not been possible to confirm Brunius' alleged thoughts on similarities with Mexican hieroglyphs. The only picture material of some resemblance to his rock carvings he found in von Strahlenberg's famous, historical-geographical description of Siberia, where rock pictures along Russian rivers are presented (von Strahlenberg 1730).

Conclusions

Brunius must have been a strong and independent personality, because his dispassionate archaeological research occurred in a milieu where reviving Gothic movements used prehistory for the identification of early heroes and to give prominence to a glorious past of the Nordic countries. This was also the main theme in contemporary literature, theatre and the arts. By chronological means he escaped this trap of hero adoration, especially in the form of Vikings. He belonged to a Lundensian group of students, who later would become well-known in the space between antiquarians and archaeologists, with young men such as Abraham Ahlqvist, Sven Petter Bexell, Magnus Bruzelius, Bror Emil Hildebrand, Sven Hylander and Sven Nilsson (Kahl 1868). Some of them lived well into old age, so the academic gatherings could incorporate several generations.

The demands on quality of the documents – with a well experienced and expressed method – are probably a consequence of influences from the natural

sciences and his own language education. His only problem in relation to the documentation was a moral one – should he, as a scientist, depict the impressive sexual organs of the male figures or not? The colleagues he consulted were both for and against. Brunius solved the problem in part by referring to other tribes such as the Lapps and the Huns as the creators of these vulgar customs, shown on the rock surfaces. The later, original Nordic people were seen as being more culturally refined and above such crude behaviour. Brunius' interest in early ethnography, which he assimilated in travel reports, was guided not so much from a point of view of primitive cultures but much more from technological observations of weapons, and above all canoes as a fast and flexible means of transport. His own childhood experiences from the powerful Kattegatt Bay gave him a maritime overview and an anchorage in the coastal way of life.

One of the most important challenges for the early archaeologists was to separate and distinguish between man-made things, artefacts, and manifestations that resembled these, but were of another nature, and the reverse: thunderbolts were not projectiles from the sky, but polished stone axes; the giant's kettle were not enormous cup-marks but the natural grinding of the bedrock; the horns of the unicorn, so appreciated since the Renaissance, were from the narwhale; and all marks in the bedrock were not runes or figures but could be just cracks. These doubtful situations were not easy to navigate, and the folklore surrounding such (wrong) views was deeply rooted. After such a fundamental separation was achieved, a more scientific approach could begin, often starting with arranging the artefacts and monuments, and classes were formed and named.

One might expect a person such as Brunius – particularly with his talent for modern languages – to be part of the wider movement of his age to travel to monuments, sites and collections in Europe. But, this was not Brunius' way – he left Sweden very infrequently, and when he did travel it was only to Denmark. Like Tham, he was a restricted vagabond and obtained much of his knowledge from the library, from colleagues he trusted and from his own field investigations.

Brunius' main problem in his early studies was the lack of adequate comparative material and the absence of guiding principles for the structure of the interpretative task. This is easy to understand as his work on the subject is probably the first comprehensive monograph study on the whole corpus of rock carvings.

He maintained his interest in the material over time. Twenty years after the initial fieldwork he added new surveys and took a very active part in archaeological discussions at the academy. His final publication, which appeared at the age of 76, is more to be seen as a sort of reformed testament. So much had happened in the intervening years. Archaeology had been given a better chronology, technical arguments were introduced, the comparative ethnography was widely used and archaeological societies, international congresses, museums and journals specialising in prehistory were created and national boards of antiquities took a more active part in prehistoric research and heritage missions.

These changes were paid attention to in the 1868 publication entitled in Swedish *Attempts at Explanations of Rock Carvings*. Unfortunately the original French form was abandoned and the circle of potential readers became limited.

One of the features of Brunius' research on prehistoric images, which gives us inspiration even today, is his interest in the construction principles of the images –

the language character of the figures – and not primarily the construction of history out of this visual material.

It is also of interest that Brunius, despite his association with the church, did not try to understand the rock art in terms of the history of religions.

It is difficult to let ideas grow and be spread. The partly very modern thinking of Carl Georg Brunius was abandoned without notice and an era of influences from the emerging history of religions followed.

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11. Alpine and Scandinavian rock art in the Bronze Age: a common cultural matrix in a web of continental influences

Umberto Sansoni with a contribution by Silvana Gavaldo

The similarities between the Alpine and the south Scandinavian rock art traditions have been pointed out by various scholars for a long time. Based on an analysis of different categories of motifs this paper aims to provide an overview over these parallels and relate them to a cultural historical context. Some of the observed similarities may reflect a human tendency to represent basic archetypes like simple human and animal figures or geometric symbols, while other motifs like particular weapons, chariots, 'solar boats', certain kinds of discs and the swastika 'roses' reflect cultural contacts along far distances. This conclusion is strengthened when we can observe similarities in the composition of particular scenes; in many of these cases we can perceive the scale of the Indo-European values, adopted in both the regions. The background to this phenomenon is the emergence of a similar kind of Bronze Age culture covering large parts of Europe. This process started already in the fourth-third millennium BC with the Corded Ware Culture but it became intensified in the Bronze Age. The character and direction of these contacts changed through time as different regional cultures replaced each other on the European scene. The rock-art is a testimony of the complexity of these contacts.

KEYWORDS: Alpine rock art, Scandinavian rock art, long-distance contacts, Corded Ware Culture, Bronze Age culture, Indo-European

Archaeological context

The Bronze Age is the first significant European culture that, for the first time after

the Palaeolithic, encompassed all the continental regions with the same basic technology and the same ideological development. The beginning can be traced to the end of the fourth–third millennium BC, when the Corded Ware Culture – and similar or connected cultures of central–eastern Europe, forcibly expanded themselves; shortly afterwards, the Bell Beaker Culture unified most of central–western Europe. The starting point of this cultural change can be found in central Germany during the second half of the fourth millennium BC, within the late Michelsberger and Wartberg Culture (with the single-grave phenomena). From there, the cultural wave spread in the area between the rivers Elbe and Dniester, the Globular Amphora Culture, in the archaeological levels of the Baden–Ezero–Cernavoda I cultures; then, at the beginning of the third millennium BC, it moved towards the middle Danubian region and northwest Balkans, in the Vucedol Culture. It eventually reached the Alps (with the Horgen, Pfyn and Remedello cultures), central Italy (Gaudio Culture) and the central continental areas (the Single Grave Culture: EGK), as well as the Baltic Sea and the coastal regions of Norway, Denmark and southern Sweden (the Corded Ware–Battle Axe Culture).

All these cultural complexes share some common aspects regarding materials or economic and funerary traditions; their origin can probably be found in the low Dnieper–Donets and middle Volga basins at the end of the fifth–first half of the fourth millennium BC (SeredniiSthi and Khvalynsk cultures), followed by Maïkop, Michailivka and Kemi Oba cultures (first examples of decorated stele) and eventually by the late Tripillia and Vsatové cultures. This framework is closely connected to the delicate Indo-European problem that involves both linguistics and archaeology. Our analysis – although mainly archaeological – is totally in accordance with the ‘integrative approach’ and its results (Lebedynsky 2009 but also Mallory 1997; Haudry 2001). Crucial in our research are the strength and the extension in space and time of the influence from the Corded Ware–Battle Axe culture (that extends from southern Scandinavia and Baltic regions to the edges of the Alps and from the western Rhine basin to the upper Volga basin); moreover, its proximity and exchanges with a family of other cultures (especially Baden–Kostolac–Vucedol, Globular Amphorae and the Bell Beaker phenomenon). We can thus correctly speak of a kind of internationalisation in materials and rituals within (and beyond) the Rhine and Volga basins (Heyd 2004; 2013).

Consequently, the beginning of the Bronze Age seems simply to have developed from what had already been established in the previous ages. A wide range of cultural complexes strongly linked to each other, took form: they are clearly defined between the Middle and the Late continental Bronze Age, just before their adjustment during the Final Bronze Age. During the last period of the Early Bronze Age, a consistent and homogeneous culture developed in the area between southern Scandinavia and the Alps (Aunjetitzian and southern German groups), and this also affected a great part of the Italian peninsula (Polada culture, Protoappennian culture); meanwhile, northern Europe was still in the so-called Final Neolithic, which was actually a mixed Chalcolithic phase with aspects from the ancient Atlantic megalithic traditions. Immediately after, around the seventeenth–sixteenth centuries BC, a new phase of strong development (Tumuli culture, Pre-Lausatian culture) that involved Scandinavia (early Nordic Bronze Age) began and led to great cultures in Italy, Terramare in the Po Valley and Appenninica in central-southern Italy). The material culture, especially the

typology of weapons and jewellery, achieved a good degree of uniformity across the whole continent (Schwenzer 2004; Krause 2004) and reveals the existence of intense changes and contacts that lead to the European metallurgical *koinè* during the Late Bronze Age (Peroni 1997).

First and foremost this phenomenon reveals not just a common stylistic trend, but the manifestation of a cultural and ideological identity. This is revealed through the Swedish rock art, which shows many similarities with that of the Alpine area (focus on discs, chariots and weapons). At this stage both the early Scandinavian Bronze Age and the EB2–MB1 of northern Italy probably receive strong external influences and ethnic grafts from the same cultural family. Among the ever-increasing contacts – although mediated – is the opening up of the ‘Amber route’ (Nava 2011) and the reverse spread of glass, faience and glass-faience beads up to northern Germany and Jutland (Bellintani 2011; Stefan 2009). In other words, the rise of Scandinavian rock art occurred in the most vital and expansive moment of the Bronze Age, between the eighteenth and the sixteenth centuries BC, when the continent experienced its greatest cultural homogeneity, establishing what would be the basis for the subsequent worldview. During the same period, the Mycenaean culture (of the Indo-European matrix) began to influence the central Mediterranean world, opening up new sea routes from Greece to southern Italy, which became progressively more connected to it, while the rest of the continent remained less involved.

So, while on the coastal regions of the Mediterranean the Mycenaean (from the seventeenth century BC) and eastern influences led to a strong cultural impulse, in the northern regions of Europe it is possible to discern how the Bronze Age spread through Scandinavia and the Baltic area, reaching hunter cultures (probably of shamanic traditions) and developing a very dynamic process, as demonstrated by the first iron items made in Norway and southern Sweden from the fourteenth–thirteenth centuries BC (Giumlia-Mair 2011). Simultaneously, there was an expansion in the east towards the Aegean Sea Anatolia, and central Asia (that is witnessed by the Pit graves culture from the Dniester to the Caspian Sea and Urals, the Afenasslévo culture on the Yenisei, Altai west, and by the complex of central Asian tombs, such as Andronovo in the late third millennium BC and its projection towards Iran and Indus, right at the middle of the second millennium). It is very interesting to note in this remote area the flourishing of rock art with close similarities to that in Europe (Rozwadowsky 2013; Sansoni 2013).

The next critical point is from the beginning of the twelfth century BC, when the structure of Europe and the Mediterranean was abruptly redesigned: the Mycenaean culture crumbled under the pressure of the new Hellenes from the Balkans; the Terramare culture collapsed in northern Italy; the Hittite empire fell and the Sea Peoples attacked the eastern coasts; in a wide region of the middle of Europe the complex of Urnfield–Lausitanian cultures rapidly emerged, while in the margins, the proto-Italic peoples (proto-Venetians, proto-Villanovans, Apennines) moved. Finally, the late Nordic Bronze Age (from period IV) began to consolidate towards the south (Lüneburger–Elbe–Havel Groups).

If, in this latter group, the Proto-Germanic can be recognised, in the Urnfield culture, the proto-Celts – penetrating from the north and east of the Alps – were already apparent. The lines of cultural convergence and the trade routes (of amber and metals) consolidated via the intense popularity of the Urnfield culture, which

also included the Italic cultures, orphan of the Mycenaean contacts. In the Alps the rock art phenomenon is relatively scarce, but features innovative themes that are a prelude to the development of the Iron Age; in the Scandinavian region, as far as it is possible to understand, there is a greater thematic continuity, although the figures of warriors and duellists increase (periods III and IV) as happens in the Alps. What follows in Hallstatt (Ha C–D) and especially in La Tène C – with the great Celtic expansion on the one hand and the emergence of the refined Mediterranean urban civilisation on the other (the Etruscans, Venetian, Greeks and Phoenicians) – is the sign of a relative gap between central-northern and southern Europe: although contacts and exchange are frequent (including imports of luxury goods of Greek and Etruscan–Italic origin), the division into two major cultural spheres deepened. Actually, until the Roman conquest, the Alps were deeply in contact with both worlds (in the central area with the Rhaetian cultures of Luco – Laugen and Meluno – Mellaun, then Fritzen – Sanzeno): the rock art, which at this stage reached its apex in quantity and typology, showed an independent and somewhat conservative line and accommodated mainly influences from the Po Valley (Etruscans, Greeks and Venetians) in the Early Iron Age (ninth–fifth centuries BC), while preferring a Celtic influence in the Late Iron Age (fourth–first century BC), just when the osmosis between the two continental spheres became more unusual. The Scandinavian art continued with thematic influences, but gradually faded away until almost switching off around the middle of the first millennium BC. Perhaps no stranger to this phenomenon is the beginning of the propulsive phase of German expansion towards the Rhine, the Vistula and across the Danube at the expense of the Hallstatt and La Tène Celtic peoples: migration of entire communities, carrying new perspectives and a renewed warrior mentality, must have devalued or at least made anaemic a rock art tradition that was more than 1000 years old. And this happens simultaneously with the birth and first expansion of Roman civilisation, which is also linked from the third to the first century BC to the decline of the Celtic world. The Roman conquest marginalises, but does not eradicate, the rock art tradition in the central Alps, even if it was already declining. Finally comes the long fatal encounter/comparison between the Germanic and the Roman sphere, which are indeed very different, but in which, not coincidentally, Tacitus, in his *De Germania*, recognises their ancient kin in the concordance of their scale of values (Germanic virtues are seen as similar to those of the Roman Republic) and in the correspondence with their pantheons. The Germanisation of Europe and the Romanisation of the Germans under the aegis of the Christian church, between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, leads to the modern world. This phase, too, has left many diachronic witnesses in the rock art of both the areas.

With the exception of a few marginal areas, we can find everywhere an Indo-European religious and ideological background, as has been stated by the findings of archaeological investigations of comparative mythology, of paleo-linguistics and, recently, of paleo-genetics (Cavalli Sforza *et al.* 2001). This is an interdisciplinary focus, as a common background throughout the entire continent can be traced, revealing the same symbolic and ideological basis. Each region developed its own peculiarities and strong identities, which can be seen as variations of a progress that is general, although inhomogeneous, and enforced by a net of interchanges that was never seen before. We should regard the Bronze Age

as an integrated system, where news, from different areas, was easily accepted.

The rock art from a common foundation

Another aspect is the expression of some basic subjects, so widespread in time and space that they have to be considered archetypal, i.e. spontaneous and autonomous symbols. Among them are human figures with raised hands (praying, so-called adorers), cupmarks, footprints (Bertilsson 2013) and some zoomorphic and geometric symbols (especially circular ones).

The simple parallels between the Alpine and Scandinavian iconography show no more than a common background and contacts, while the analysis of a wider context could point to the structures of deeper phenomena: this is why we should consider the whole continental context, and in particular the similar rock art manifestations, *in primis* the broad contexts of the western and eastern areas, such as the Iberian peninsula and Caucasian–central western Asia.

Scandinavia's importation of copper from Carpathian Mountains, Sardinia, Alps and the Iberian Peninsula (along with the use of typologies coming from the southern regions: Krause 2011; Ling and Rowlands 2013) suggests that a consistent flow of cultural exchanges took place along the same routes: not only mineral and objects but also ideas and even cultural fashions were transported. This is clearly visible, for instance, when considering the changes in the shape of some elements in the accoutrement of warriors, like weapons, shields and chariots, but also in decorative elements, like circular symbols. And, it is actually further witnessed by the appearance of technological innovations like the chariot during the Bronze Age in the Caucasus and central Asia, and in several areas of middle–southern Europe in iconography, in grave goods and in Scandinavia, so far, only in rock art).

Thus, we could state firstly that the evidence of a common foundation throughout all of Europe during the Bronze Age shows the uniform character of this age's culture: differences are due to mere regional adaptations and are not substantial. Secondly, in a complex ensemble of influences and with a starting point in the third millennium, the great part of Alpine and Scandinavian rock art had its origin in the predominant culture in middle Europe during the beginning of the first millennium BC, in particular in the central–eastern part of the continent.

In fact, the end of third millennium or the beginning of the second millennium BC is likely to have been the starting point for the post-Mesolithic rock art in southern Scandinavia, while in the Alps, after the dense expression of the late fourth–third millennium BC, the focus on some representations of single (not wielded) weapons and discs slowly faded away, replaced by close attention to human figures, such as warriors and adorers (the latter being an 'old' pattern, having been represented since the Neolithic).

It is not easy to understand the exact sequence of the cultural phases in Scandinavia (Kaul 1998; Hygen and Bengtsson 2000), but the main themes of the rock engravings reveal a surprisingly strict correspondence with the Alpine rock art heritage, throughout the period until the end of the Scandinavian Bronze Age. Then, in the Alps, there is a sudden iconographic increase in the rock art during the first Iron Age (ninth–fourth century BC), a period in which, as seen, contacts between northern and southern Europe were probably fewer and weaker. In Scandinavia, the scenario is actually the opposite and the 'production' of rock art,

after a peak in period 5, seems to cease during the first period of the Iron Age, that is, the pre-Roman or Celtic period.

During the second part of the last millennium BC there was a sort of major conservative tradition in Scandinavia, which appears to be less stimulated than that in the Alps; here Villanovans – Etruscans, Greeks, Venetian (and Celts) extended directly their area of influence and became dominant. Their influence reached northern Europe in a very feeble, mediated way. Actually, this is the period in which northern and south-eastern Europe began to progress at two different speeds, causing a gap that was filled only in the Christian Middle Ages.

Scandinavian and Alpine similarities

The iconography in Alpine and Scandinavian rock art converges in particular subjects: two and four-wheeled carts, ploughing scenes, circular signs (crossed, dotted, wheeled, rayed, sun-shaped and handled), weapons (axes, shields, spears, daggers and swords, in decreasing order of importance), human figures with big open hands, ithyphallic human figures and copulation scenes. During the Alpine Iron Age (from the ninth century BC) other subjects may be added: musicians and dancers, bird-shaped boats, footprints, 'swastika-roses'; horses are frequently associated with discs in both rock art areas; boats and hut-barns probably share the same funerary symbolism. In each phase we find different typologies of cupmarks (single, in geometric patterns, in a line, in groups); finally, the first manifestation of writing appears in the late periods (not before the end of the sixth century BC in the central Alps).

A synthesis of the main similarities regarding the most important subjects is presented below and in Table 11.1. Comparative examples from the two regions are illustrated in Figures 11.1–11.12.

Table 11.1. Rock art symbols found in Scandinavia and the Alps.

										
ALPS (III-I mil)	****	***	**	**	***	*	**	***	**	***
SCANDINAVIA (II-I mil)	***	***	***	**	***	*	*	***	***	***
										
ALPS (III-I mil)	**	**	***	***	**	****	*	***	***	***
SCANDINAVIA (II-I mil)	**	**	*	**	*	****	*	**	**	**

SCANDINAVIA I



ALPS I

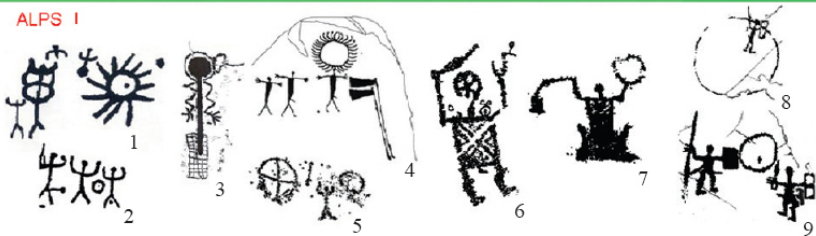


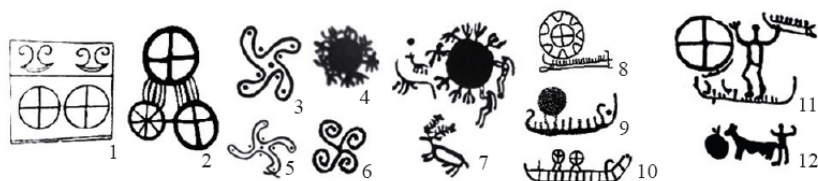
Fig. 11.1. **SCANDINAVIA:** 1. Askum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1998); 2. Hede, Kville and Aspeberget, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Van Hoek 1998); 3. Askum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2002); 4. Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1995); 5. Backa Brastad, Bohuslän, Sweden (Abelin 2000); 6. Flyhov, Västergötland, Sweden (Bertilsson 1989). **ALPS:** 1. Corendel Valento, Valcamonica, Italy (Anati 1982a); 2. Corendel Valento, Valcamonica, Italy (Anati 1982a); 3. Mont Bego, France (De Lumley 1996); 4. Ossimo IX stela, Valcamonica, Italy (Casini 1994); 5. Luine, Valcamonica, Italy (Anati 1982b); 6. Paspardo, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Le Orme dell'Uomo); 7. Campanine, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 8. Pagherina, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 9. Pagherina, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP).

Human figures

Warriors or entities with weapons

In the central Alps there is little evidence of this theme until the Final Bronze Age, and in the Iron Age it became especially prevalent. Warriors were then normally represented with a shield and sword or axe/spear, rarely wearing helmets or keeping their sword in the sheath; there are many riders and many duelling pairs. Arm muscles are often emphasised.

In Scandinavia many warriors are represented holding their weapons. These comprise axes (prevalent)/spears/bows, while swords are rare, and in many cases the weapon is sheathed and hanging from the warrior's belt; shields (often covering the bodies) and helmets sometimes occur in highly stylised form with paired horns, and duelling pairs are unusual; the muscles of the legs are prominent, probably to show the strength of the warrior by the main part of the body visible behind the shield. In both of the areas warriors are dominant subjects: if they appear alone in a scene they hold weapons raised over the head, are frequently ithyphallic – to underline the manly power of dominance – and in some cases are gigantic. In many figures we can recognise representations of gods, mythical heroes (as typical in Greek and Italic coeval art) or illustrious dead ancestors; the framework of the representations is always ritual. The armed man appears to qualify, in the Indo-European mental model, as a free man fully exercising his social prerogatives (as in German *tings*, or in the Roman-Italic *comitia centuriata*).



ALPS II

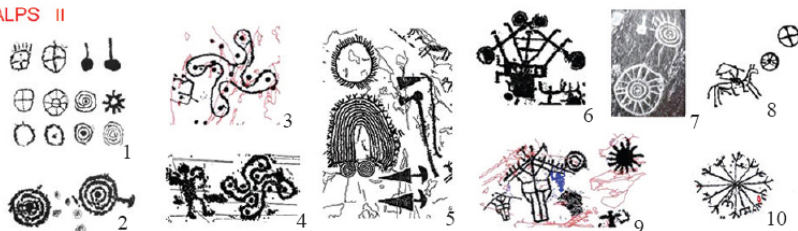


Fig. 11.2. **SCANDINAVIA**: 1. Kivik grave, Scania, Sweden (Goldhahn 2005); 2. Backa Brastad, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2009); 3. Askum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2002); 4. Askum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2002); 5. Fossum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1999); 6. Tossene, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2009); 7. Aspeberget, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1996); 8. Aspeberget, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1996); 9. Ullensvang, Hordaland, Norge (Sandland 1997); 10. Tossene, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2009); 11. Egely, Bornholm, Denmark (Kaul 1998); 12. Åby, Tossene, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2009).

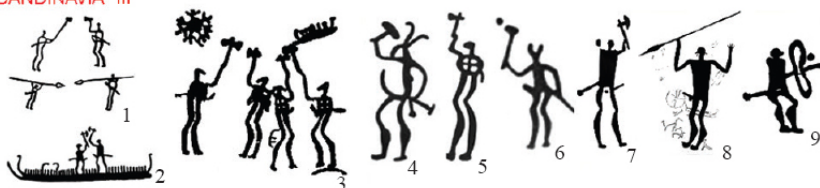
ALPS: 1. Mont Bego, France (De Lumley 1996; Dufrenne 1997); 2. Luine, Valcamonica, Italy (Anati 1982b); 3. Carpena, Valcamonica, Italy (Sansoni 1987); 4. Pià d'Ort, Valcamonica, Italy (Farina 1998); 5. Bagnolo II stela, Valcamonica, Italy (Casini 1994); 6. Campanine, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 7. Dos del Pater, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 8. Seradina, Valcamonica, Italy (Anati 1982a); 9. Zurla, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP).

Riders

In the central Alps, riders, generally armed, emphasise their symbolic value connected with a high social position and the development of an aristocracy, marked by the use of weapons and the breeding of horses. The horsemen counted to date are 335 on a total of 735 horses in Valcamonica.

In Scandinavia there are fewer examples of horse riders, but their presence in the last phases is significant. Their rarity, not just numerically but also when the position in the scene is concerned, testifies to the different value of the horse as a *status symbol* in the northern cultures: there, according to what Latin sources tell us, the aristocracy is very different from that in the Mediterranean, more egalitarian and characterised by a prestige of the warrior which is independent from ostentatious representation formulas.

SCANDINAVIA III



ALPS III

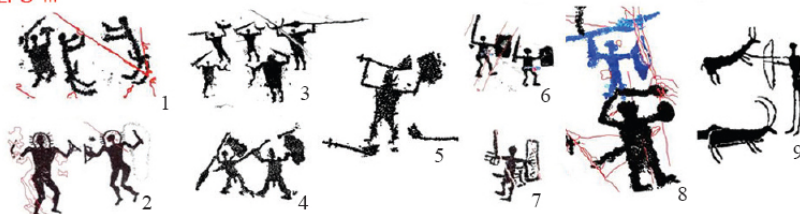


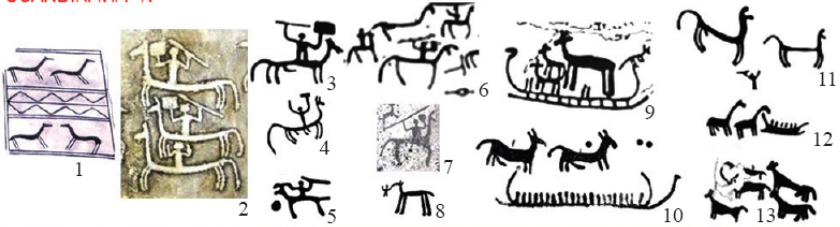
Fig. 11.3. **SCANDINAVIA:** 1. Bro Utmark, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu 1996); 2. Fossum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Coles 1990); 3. Aspeberget, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Prøhl 1996); 4. Lövsåsen, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson and Olsson 2000); 5. Aspeberget, Bohuslän, Sweden (Coles 1990); 6. Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson and Olsson 2000); 7. Fossum, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Abelin 2000); 8. Litsleby, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Abelin 2000); 9. Varlöv, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Prøhl 1999). **ALPS:** 1. Zurla, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 2. Zurla, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 3. Campanine, Valcamonica, Italy (Sansoni Gavaldo 2009); 4. I Verdi, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 5. Paspardo, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Le Orme dell'Uomo); 6. Ronchi di Zir, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 7. Dos del Pater, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 8. Ronchi di Zir, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 9. Tirano. Lovero stela, Valtellina, Italy (Casini 1994).

In both the areas, most of the horsemen are armed with a spear and shield. In Valcamonica, and in Scania and Bohuslän, there are some very interesting examples of acrobatic riders standing on their horses performing what might be interpreted as an initiation ritual.

Hunters

In both the areas, a small percentage of the human figures are hunting. In Valcamonica, most of them, especially riders, are chasing stags in a typical aristocratic manner of the Iron Age; hunting scenes often describe myths or ritual events, where the hunter is equipped with a shield and a helmet, as a warrior. Both in Scandinavia and the Alps there are archers that are apparently performing the act of hunting, but in Bohuslän there are also two very prominent examples of archers as duelling warriors at Slänge in Tanum and at Torp in Kville. These scenes stand in obvious contrast to the well-attested negative conception that in the southern European cultures in the Late Bronze Age only the most cowardly warriors used the bow and arrow; here we detect the influence of the heroic conceptions of the Bronze Age. But apparently a different view of the warrior's use of the bow existed in Scandinavia.

SCANDINAVIA IV

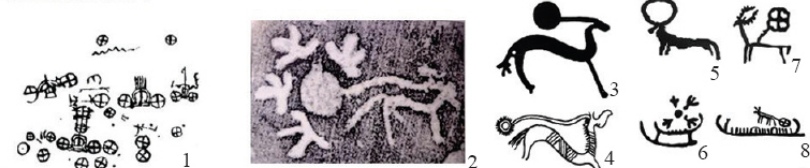


ALPS IV



Fig. 11.4. **SCANDINAVIA**: 1. Kivik grave, Scania, Sweden (Goldhahn 2005); 2. Tegneby, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 2004); 3. Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1995); 4. Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1995); 5. Tegneby, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1995); 6. Tegneby, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1995); 7. Tegneby, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1995); 8. Tossene, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2009); 9. Aspeberget, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1996); 10. Tossene, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2009); 11. Litsleby, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1995); 12. Fiskeby, Bohuslän, Sweden (VV. AA. 1966); 13. Åby, Tossene, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2009). **ALPS**: 1. Ronchi di Zir, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 2. Campanine, Valcamonica, Italy (Sansonini and Gavaldo 2009); 3. Ronchi di Zir, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 4. Foppe di Nadro, Valcamonica, Italy (Anati 1982a); 5. Pagherina, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 6. Pagherina, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP).

SCANDINAVIA V



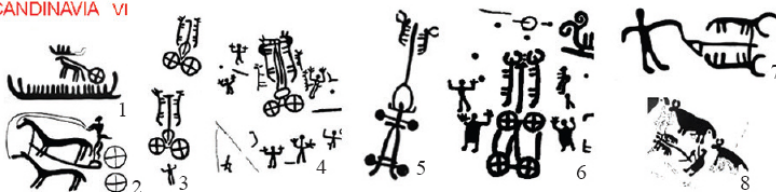
ALPS V



Fig. 11.5. **SCANDINAVIA**: 1. Frännarp, Scania, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 2009); 2. Kalleby, Bohuslän, Sweden (Sansonini et al. 1999); 3. Balken, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1999); 4. Razor from Neder Hvolris, Viborg, Denmark (Milstreu and Pröhl 1999); 5. Kville, Bohuslän, Sweden (Abelin 2000); 6. Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1995); 7. Kville, Bohuslän, Sweden (Sansonini et al. 1999); 8. Tossene, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2009). **ALPS**: 1.

Seradina, Valcamonica, Italy (Anati 1982a); 2. Cemmo I stelae, Valcamonica, Italy (Casini 1994); 3. Seradina, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 4. Ronchi di Zir, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 5. Seradina, Valcamonica, Italy (photo by CCSP); 6. Zurla, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP).

SCANDINAVIA VI



ALPS VI

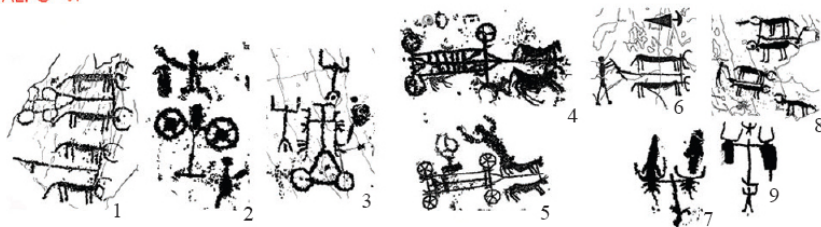


Fig 11.6. **SCANDINAVIA**: 1. Kalleby, Bohuslän, Sweden (Abelin 2000); 2. Kivik grave, Scania, Sweden (Johansen 2011); 3. Askum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2002); 4. Askum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2002); 5. Askum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1998); 6. Askum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2002); 7. Finntorp, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (tracing by Bengtsson); 8. Aspeberget, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1996); **ALPS**: 1. Cemmo I stelae, Valcamonica, Italy (Casini 1994); 2. Naquane, Valcamonica, Italy (Van Berg-Osterrieth 1972); 3. Campanine, Valcamonica, Italy (Sansoni and Gavaldo 2009); 4. Naquane, Valcamonica, Italy (Van Berg-Osterrieth 1972); 5. Corendel Valento, Valcamonica, Italy (Van Berg-Osterrieth 1972); 6. Bagnolo II stelae, Valcamonica, Italy (Casini 2004); 7. Mont Bego, France (De Lumley 1996); 8. Foppe di Nadro, Valcamonica, Italy (Sansoni 2007); 9. Mont Bego, France (De Lumley 1996).

SCANDINAVIA VII



ALPS VII



Fig. 11.7. **SCANDINAVIA**: 1. Kivik grave, Scania, Sweden (Goldhahn 2005); 2. Simrishamn, Scania, Sweden (Kristiansen 2012); 3. Simrislund, Simrishamn, Scania, Sweden (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP and Rock Care); 4. Ekenberg, Östergötland, Sweden (VV.AA. 1966); **ALPS**: 1. Caven II stelae, Valtellina, Italy (Casini 1994); 2. Mont Bego, France (De Lumley 1996); 3. Foppe di Nadro, Valcamonica, Italy (Chiodi Masnata 2004); 4. Tresivio, Valtellina, Italy (et al. 1999); 5. Pagherina, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 6. Campanine, Valcamonica, Italy (Sansoni and Gavaldo 2009); 7. Campanine, Valcamonica, Italy (Sansoni and Gavaldo 2009); 8. Mont Bego, France (De Lumley 1996); 9. Campanine, Valcamonica, Italy (Sansoni and Gavaldo 2009); 10. Boscetelle, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP).

SCANDINAVIA VIII

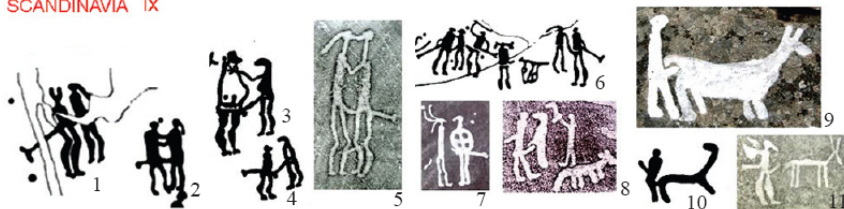


ALPS VIII



Fig. 11.8. **SCANDINAVIA**: 1. Masseberg, Bohuslän, Sweden (Coles 1990); 2. Aspeberget, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Prøhl 1996); 3. Aspeberget, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Prøhl 1999); 4. Fossum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Prøhl 1999); 5. Torsbo, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2001); 6. Backa Brastad, Bohuslän, Sweden (Evers 2001); 7. Kallsängen, Bottna, Bohuslän, Sweden (Hygen and Bengtsson 2000). **ALPS**: 1. Seradina, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by CCSP); 2. Pagherina, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 3. Zurla, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 4. Naquane, Valcamonica, Italy (Anati 1982a); 5. Naquane, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Le Ormedell'Uomo); 6. Cemmo II stelae, Valcamonica, Italy (Casini 1994); 7. Mont Bego, France (De Lumley 1996); 8. Tirano. Lovero, Valtellina, Italy (Casini 1994); 9. Naquane, Valcamonica, Italy (photo by CCSP).

SCANDINAVIA IX



ALPS IX

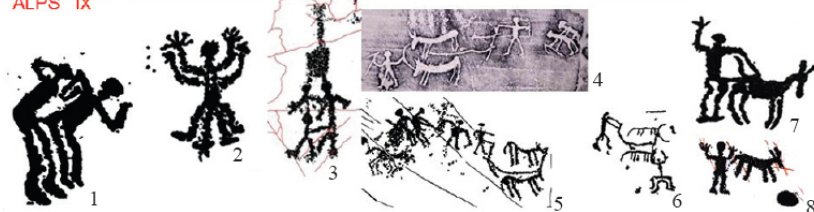


Fig. 11.9. **SCANDINAVIA**: 1. Tuvene, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson and Olsson 2000); 2. Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1995); 3. Varlöv, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1999); 4. Vitlycke, Bohuslän, Sweden (Coles 1990); 5. Kville, Bohuslän, Sweden (Ling 2008); 6. Slänge, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1999); 7. Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Evers 2001); 8. Kville, Bohuslän, Sweden (tracing by Milstreu); 9. Sagaholm mound, Jönköping, Sweden (Randsborg 1996); 10. Kallsängen, Bohuslän, Sweden (Coles 1990). **ALPS**: 1. Zurla, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 2. Foppe di Nadro, Valcamonica, Italy (Anati 1982a); 3. Foppe di nadro, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 4. Seradina, Valcamonica, Italy (photo by CCSP); 5. Seradina, Valcamonica, Italy (Anati 1982a); 6. Dos Cui, Valcamonica, Italy (Anati 1982a); 7. Coren del Valento, Valcamonica, Italy (Anati 1982a); 8. Pagherina, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP).

SCANDINAVIA X



ALPS X

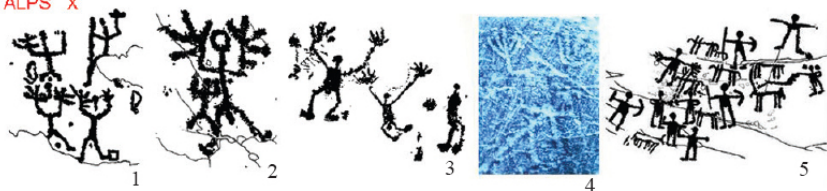
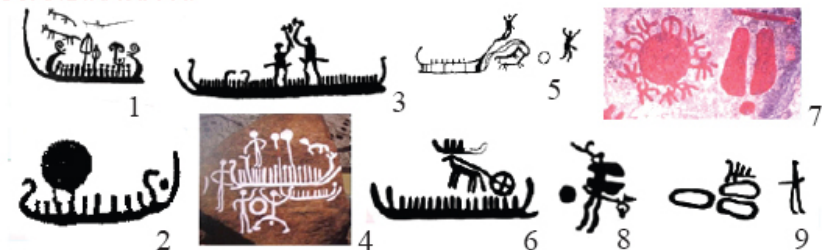


Fig. 11.10. **SCANDINAVIA**: 1. Aspeberget, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 2004); 2. Vitlycke, Bohuslän, Sweden (Hygen and Bengtsson 2000); 3. Kville, Bohuslän, Sweden (Abelin 2000); 4. Kville, Bohuslän, Sweden (Abelin 2000); 5. Rixö, Brastad, Bohuslän, Sweden (Coles 1990); 6. Askum Raä, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1998); 7. Askum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Abelin 2000); 8. Kville, Bohuslän, Sweden (Abelin 2000); 9. Tegneby, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 1995); 10. Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson and Olsson 2000); 11. Tossene,

Bohuslän, Sweden (Bengtsson 2009); 12. Slänge, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1999);
ALPS: 1. Naquane, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 2. Campanine,
Valcamonica, Italy (Sansoni Gavaldo 2009); 3. Cereto, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by CCSP); 4.
Pagherina, Valcamonica, Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP); 5. Seradina, Valcamonica,
Italy (tracing by Dip. Valcamonica CCSP).

SCANDINAVIA XI



ALPS XI

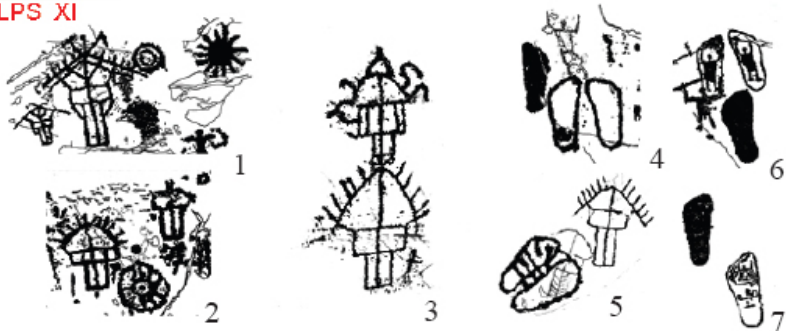


Fig. 11.11. **SCANDINAVIA** 1. Åby, Tossene, Bohuslän, Sweden (Bertilsson 2004b); 2. Svarteborg, Bohuslän, Sweden; 3. Fossum, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1999); 4. Zealand, Denmark (Bertilsson 2004b); 5. Fiskeby, Östergötland, Sweden; 6. Kalleby, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1999); 7. Fossum, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1999); 8. Fossum, Tanum, Bohuslän, Sweden (Milstreu and Pröhl 1999); 9. Kville, Bohuslän, Sweden. **ALPS:** 1. Dos del Pater, Valcamonica (tracing by Dip-Valcamonica CCSP); 2. Campanine, Valcamonica (Sansoni and Gavaldo 2009); 3. Campanine, Valcamonica (Sansoni and Gavaldo 2009); 4. Campanine, Valcamonica (Sansoni and Gavaldo 2009); 5. Boscatelle, Valcamonica (tracing by Dip-Valcamonica CCSP); 6–7. Zurla, Valcamonica (tracing by Dip-Valcamonica CCSP).

ALPS XII



SCANDINAVIA XII



Fig. 11.12. ALPS 1. *Foppe di Nadro, Valcamonica (tracing by Dip-Valcamonica CCSP).*
SCANDINAVIA *Alskog, Tjängvide, Gotland, Sweden.*

Adorers and 'big hands'

In the central Alps the majority of 'praying' humans is dated from the late Neolithic–Copper Age (styles II–III A), and the Middle to Late Bronze Age (style III B–D) when there are also numerous female figures; a smaller percentage is dated to the Iron Age (style IV) and consists only of male figures. During the entire period many praying figures were represented with big hands as a sign of ritual – or spiritual – power.

In Scandinavia adorers are well represented among human figures and most of them have 'big hands'. In both the areas the symbolic role/importance of these categories is high, since they plausibly represent adoring priests or entities like gods, and are related to the ritual world. The presence of collective scenes and adorers associated with circular symbols, sometimes placed near tools or structures such as carts, huts and boats, is significant.

Hierogamic-sexual scenes

There are relatively few copulation scenes in the central Alps. The first example was probably engraved during the Chalcolithic Age (Dos Cui); then, probably in the later Bronze Age, the pair is represented face to face and the woman is pregnant (Foppe di Nadro); during the Iron Age there is a small series (six scenes) where the man is standing behind the woman. Three of these scenes are in close association with ploughing scenes (Seradina I) in the context of agrarian rituals, which can also be recognised in the art of the *situlae* (typical of the Veneto region and nearest eastern regions). In Scandinavia the Hierogamic-sexual scenes are more frequent: the pair is always standing face to face, the man usually wears a sword by his side and, in one well-known case, at Vitlycke, there is another male figure, carved beside the couple, which holds an axe near to their heads. In some panels two or more couples are represented in the same scene. Many similar examples are found same in the central Asian (Indo-European) rock art (Sansoni 2013). Both the areas, like the central Asian, also share an interesting pattern with representations of bestiality, which is sexual scenes with man and animal; in the Alpine area the animal is equidae, but in Scandinavia it may also be bovidae.

Female figures

In the central Alps, whilst women are frequently represented in the Neolithic–

Chalcolithic I period (their percentage is higher than that of males), they greatly decrease in Bronze Age, although there are three apparently pregnant figures, and females are frequently associated with smaller figures (children?). From the end of the Bronze Age and throughout the entire Iron Age images of females are extremely rare, appearing almost exclusively in sexual-Hierogamic scenes. It is interesting to note that what is symbolically emphasised is the single moment when men are essential in the reproductive process: it is possible that the woman, here, is represented just as an instrument for enhancing the masculine virtue, such as the horse for the rider or the weapon for the warrior. In this we can see a typical trend of the Indo-European world: one may thus wonder whether the Alpine rock art of the Iron Age was not mostly, or exclusively in certain phases, a prerogative of brotherhoods or a ritual sphere for men only, even if in this phase the feminine was probably symbolised by other signs (such as shovels, footprints, or some huts or barns).

In Scandinavia, female figures are often represented, even if in limited areas and numbers, and are often the protagonists of ritual or symbolic scenes. However, the majority of the occurrences are in a Hierogamic-sexual context and the schematic figures seem to belong to the more ancient phases.

Other anthropomorphic figures

In the rock art of both areas other kinds of human figures are also represented: musicians (playing wind instruments) and dancers; mythological figures which are a sort of hybrid between humans and animals?, masked people, monsters, incomplete humans or busts (more frequent in Valcamonica, but also appear very occasionally in Scandinavia). There are also workers in the form of ploughmen, as well as fishermen and rowers, which are only found in Scandinavia, and smiths and weavers, which are only in Valcamonica. Very notable is the correspondence within two scenes of 'execution', where an armed man holds his weapon over the head of an armless human figure (this pattern is rare in Valcamonica, frequent in Scandinavia).

Animals

In the central Alps during the Chalcolithic period there was a great emphasis on wild animals (deer, goats etc.) and, to a lesser extent, on domestic animals (oxen, dogs). During the Bronze Age the engravings of animal figures are drastically fewer (focusing on deer), while in the Iron Age, there is a general increase of rock art subjects, and a large range of species is represented, focusing especially on stags (437 catalogued), horses (735 listed), dogs and aquatic birds.

In Scandinavia, the rock art themes seem to show less interest in animals; there is apparently more attention given to them during the later phases, especially to horses (without riders) and to rare stags, dogs, birds, wolves and dogs.

To be noted in both areas is the presence of mythological animals, as well as the particular association between horses and discs and the prominence of snakes (or snake-shaped signs). Only a small number of scenes clearly refer to hunting, usually stags in Valcamonica and in Scandinavia). From the Urnfield phase, small boats with duck features spread in the two areas, both in the ornamentation found in material culture and in rock art. Often holding discs as the simple boats of Scandinavia, they can also carry human beings, inscriptions or huts, albeit only in

the Alps.

Weapons

Weapons have much importance in both contexts. In the Alps during the Chalcolithic and until the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age there is no certain anthropomorphic figure that is armed, but weapons are neatly arranged: halberds (until the beginning of the Early Bronze Age), axes, daggers, rare bow and arrow sets and spears (only from the Early Bronze Age onwards). From the Middle and Late Bronze Age, with the emergence of the warrior, the single weapons decreased considerably and the first swords appear. In the Iron Age there is a strong recovery, especially of axes and spears and, towards the end of the phase, knives, swords, and bow and arrows (from Roman times) occasionally appear. In Scandinavia the axe is very important, but images of swords and spears also appear. The central European stele of Tübingen–Weilheim and Lumbren (Fossati 2007) testify to the unity of the cultural system in these areas, while much of the continent – since the Chalcolithic phase – displays a similar attention to weapons in funerary contexts and, during the Bronze Age, also in votive depositions. The symbolic value, which seems to transcend the simple meaning of war and warrior, is huge: the first historical accounts state with relative clarity the sacred and divine powers attributed to weapons, including the link to sacrificial rituals. It is interesting to note the symbolic relevance of the spear, the successive emblem of Odin and Ares–Mars, and the most characteristic weapons of Iliad's heroes and German's warriors *framae* (in Tacitus, *De Germania*, VI) like the axe, the emblem of Thor (hammer axe), Esus, Varuna and uranic power in Greek–Italian and Veda traditions, and also the most typical weapon of historical alpine Raetians (Sansoni 2013b). Throughout the phenomenon, in parallel with the emphasis on armed figures and other similar developments in central Asia, we must recognize one of the most obvious elements of the gradual emergence of the Indo–European ideology.

Symbols

Discs and circles

In all central alpine areas, circular signs, simple or rayed, as solar discs, but also concentric, crossed, spiral on feminine stele, seem to have had a great importance since the Chalcolithic, and they maintained a central role until the rock art of the Early and Middle Bronze Age, in a strong relationship with axes. This symbol then became less prominent, but was still significant, up to the Late Iron Age, when it seems sometimes associated, in simple or rayed shape, with images of the Uranian gods, whose realm and power were related to the sky, and therefore similar to the Celtic Taranis and the Italic Jupiter.

In Scandinavia the sign has a greater and more constant value, especially the circle-cross. And just like in Valcamonica, there is an apparent connection between crossed discs and chariot's wheels; in some examples the disc is linked to a horse as a solar disc, or is carved in the focal point of a panel and encircled by human figures, or is carried by boats. In some cases warriors with axes are strictly associated with single discs or ones that are surrounded by cupmarks. This association between axe and disc is a typical example of continuity and can be

found throughout Europe and central Asia in all pre- and protohistory from the Chalcolithic phase onwards.

A rare but important design of Scandinavian rock art is the disc with three or more short rays or birds; in some examples it is associated with female figures, like at Aspeberget in Tanum. In some cases, like at Balken and Kalleby in Tanum, it is linked to a horse. Quite notably, in Valcamonica (Zurla, Foppe di Nadro) there are two carvings of a sort of 'asterisk' that has some of the ends shaped in a similar 'three-finger' pattern (bird's feet?). Another parallel is found in discs with handles, well represented in the Alps during the middle stages of the Bronze Age and also known in Scandinavia in the material finds (Kaul 1998b). In both areas, especially during the central European Bronze Age, the discs and circles hold profound symbolic importance, and we can regard them as guide-symbols (especially if concentric or encircling a cross), or as the 'flag' of the period.

Footprints

This symbol is very common both in Valcamonica and Scandinavia, and the typologies are very similar in the two areas. So far, in Valcamonica, 1317 footprints have been recorded, falling into nine different typologies, with regard to their size, orientation, angle, associations, position in the panel, and dating. The basic shape is the outlined foot (57.6% in Valcamonica), wearing shoes or sandals (22.7%); sometimes the foot is filled by other carved images, sometimes it is bare with toes depicted.

The analysis of data shows that footprints have been carved following clear rules: for example, in Valcamonica 95.4% of the examples of this symbol occur on the eastern slopes; among these, 70.6% are carved pointed upwards (towards the sky), with the natural angle of the surface taken into account (to the sky or mountains?), while only 59.5% are oriented towards the east, which reveals that less importance was given to the orientation than to the angle of the sign (Gavaldo 2009); the main association is with other symbols (71.3%), with warriors (63%) and with huts (52%). It appears that this sign was engraved to highlight important figures, and it was often placed in the lowest part of the panel. The meaning varies between votive offerings, and is a sign of the divine presence, and it also survives in folklore. In Scandinavia, too, the sign is often represented in panels near to armed men or important symbols, whereas a great number are carved facing downward, which may be interpreted as being intended to point into the sea or to the Underworld.

Swastika 'roses'

This peculiar symbol can be found in both of the areas. It seems to have a greater importance in Valcamonica during the Iron Age, where it is represented following two patterns (swastika-cross and simple cross: '*Rosa Camuna*'), and is commonly associated with warriors.

In Scandinavia one type (Askum Raä 80) is carved following the same scheme as in Valcamonica (a cross formed by nine dots), while other engravings are different (Askum Raä 76) and the well-known representation at Dingle in Bohuslän.

The swastika-cross symbol, notably, is also found in Britain (Ilkley, Yorkshire, probably Celtic symbol) as well as in central Africa (Niger!) while the simple crossed shape can be found in a wider context (Iberia and generally in Celtic art).

Hut or barns and boats

Hut-barns in Valcamonica and boats in Scandinavia are thought to be the most characteristic subjects in the rock art of the two areas. These symbols, that apparently are very different, probably share the same ritual context, mainly linked to the symbolism of funerary passage.

The typologies of each subject are extremely varied, but some interesting associations occur both with hut-barns and with boats (horses or horse heads as a decorative element, footprints, warriors, adorers, weapons and especially different kinds of discs).

The hut-barns in Valcamonica (2009 catalogued) date to the Iron Age, probably not earlier than the late eighth century BC (Savardi 2009). In recent research in Scandinavia the boats are thought also mirror actual travels and transports (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005; Ling 2008).

Their most significant relationship could be with a well-known funerary custom: in a wide region of northern Europe (Scania, Denmark, Magdeburg, Poland), typical clay miniatures of huts and, probably, barns, were used during the Bronze Age as cinerary urns; the same occurs in central Italy (Toscana, Lazio; Final Bronze Age/beginning of the Iron Age with the last examples during the Roman phase). The maternal and feminine sphere is sometimes connected with huts or barns: evidence of this is found in the female funerary contexts with model barns found in the Attic tombs of the eighth–seventh century BC (Langdon 2005); in parallel, the well-known use of funerary boats continued in Scandinavia up to the Viking era. The symbolic connection with the cyclic journey of the sun is also significant (Kaul 1998a; 1998b).

Chariots and ploughing scenes

This is a very prominent theme in the rock art of Valcamonica and Scandinavia, and is also important in the central Asian sites. The first representations of four-wheeled cart and ploughing scenes started in the Alps in the third millennium in the Chalcolithic, and then, after just a few examples during the Bronze Age, became widespread in the Early Iron Age. In Scandinavia the chariot was emphasized since the first period. Notably, in the Chalcolithic (Monte Bego) and Bronze Age (Valcamonica) Alpine examples, the chariots are depicted in close connection with adorers, revealing their particular ritual symbolism.

Other examples

Cupmarks

This simple sign was of great importance in both the areas, as in many other sites in Europe and all over the world. Cupmarks in Scandinavia and in the Alps show the same tendency of being carved in groups, even big groups, sometimes in geometric patterns, generally alone or associated with grooves or a few other figurative subjects. Their chronology is usually impossible to trace, but there is some strong evidence of their presence in the Alps from the Neolithic right up to the Christian era (Sansoni 2005). These elements seem to show, in all periods, a kind of common expression (full of different meanings) across the entire Alpine region. On the basis of what has been published to date, it seems possible to assume the same for the Scandinavian area, where they are also strongly

associated with the Megalithic tombs.

Topographic maps

The representation of the environment (fields, paths, villages) is an important theme in the rock art of Valcamonica (from the Late Neolithic to the Early Iron Age) and in Mount Bego (from Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age). The carvings show different settlements, small villages, and are often linked with ploughing scenes (Dos Cui, Foppe di Nadro) and daggers. The most complex maps seem to be placed on surfaces whose shapes recall the orography of the real slopes (Bedolina, Piad'Ort).

In Scandinavia the subject is less evident and remains unclear; possible examples are in Tossene 106 (Bengtsson 2009) and at Sotetorp and Trättelanda.

Conclusion

These cursory notes, forming only a preliminary synthesis, point out, in a general, a consistent tendency for parallels, sometimes even direct parallels, between Alpine and Scandinavian rock art. If we consider the human tendency for representing basic archetypes as natural and obvious, we can exclude part of these subjects from our analysis (simple human figures, animals, simple symbols such as generic circular-geometric ones and cupmarks, perhaps footprints). But, all the other similarities seem to be due to some cultural waves, the result of contacts. Examples include chariots, the emphasis on particular weapons, 'solar boats', discs with a handle, and perhaps swastika 'roses', especially when we observe some particular pattern in their arrangement or combination of components in a scene.

It is possible, and in fact not so difficult, to imagine more direct contacts between the northern and southern part of the continent along the trade routes, even with the mediating help of the central European cultures. On the other hand, the similarities between the two areas (and other European and central-Asiatic areas as well) reveal deeply rooted common traditions in the central axis of Europe. These traditions, which can be seen in the Alps from the beginning of the third millennium BC, and which reached Scandinavia most intensively at the beginning of the second millennium, but can already be found in northern-central Europe at the end of fourth millennium BC, seem to be very clear clues of the progression of the Indo-European influence on the continent.

Rock art provides a chance to examine the symbolic ideology of different cultures, thus verifying the extent and steps of a vast and very homogeneous process that archaeology, paleo-linguistics and paleo-genetics are now defining with increasing precision.

It is our hope to proceed together closely as we analyse our rock art heritage, and, for example, to compare the data regarding the distribution, concentration and combination of specific subjects, or the chronological and typological characters of the two areas, or of certain sites and particular surfaces. We believe that in this way it will be possible to better decipher the syntax of our respective rock art traditions, as well as the roots and the stages of development of the western protohistoric culture.

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The maritime factor in the distribution of Bronze Age rock art in Galicia

Manuel Santos-Estévez and Alejandro Güimil-Fariña

The Atlantic Rock Art Style seems to have originated during the Neolithic period and is widely distributed along Europe's Atlantic façade, in Ireland, Great Britain and the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula. The cup-and-ring motifs are the most representative symbols of the Atlantic Rock Art Style in the Neolithic period. During the Bronze Age, this rock art tradition continued in Iberia, undergoing iconographic changes, including motifs like daggers, halberds and other types of Bronze Age weapons.

In Galicia (north-western Iberia), most rock art panels with Atlantic-style motifs are located in the coastal region of the Rías Baixas and on mountainous sites situated not further than 30 km from the coastline. Through a combined analysis of geographical data and rock art distribution, it seems likely that one of the factors that influenced the location of the carvings was accessibility to the coast and navigation. Rock art is located on higher hills close to the coast, from where it would have been possible to control natural harbours of western bays and a large expanse of sea. Analysing the visibility and accessibility of rock art sites, it is possible to define a systematic relationship between rock art and navigation.

KEYWORDS: Atlantic Rock Art Style, geographical analysis, Bronze Age, navigation, landscape

Introduction

One of the functions of rock art is to signify places, and thus give the landscape meaning. In the case of the Iberian Northwest during the Bronze Age this meaning could have been to control certain critical points of the landscape in order to define a territory and to regulate access to and transit across it. This process would

have taken place in an historical context in which trading in certain prestigious goods, especially metals, played a part in the construction of the social reality of the Bronze Age. Therefore, in communities without a state, which lacked some mechanisms of social control, the role of the symbolic and the ritual, among other resources, contributed towards generating social cohesion and towards maintaining power structures. These are functions that rock art, as iconographic artefacts and monuments, could have carried out very well.

This article presents the evidence and arguments relating to the association between the position of rock carvings depicting weapons and the estuaries and bays of the western coast of Galicia, which were favourable places for commercial and social exchange among communities. Although the scope of these exchanges is still difficult to define, authors such as Ruiz-Gálvez Priego (1998), Kristiansen (1998) and Kristiansen and Larsson (2005) maintain that asserting control over routes, especially those concerning the metal trade and prestige goods (the so-called *prestige chains*, see Renfrew 1972: 465), could have been a key factor in the development of societies in Late Prehistory as transmitters of symbols and ideologies and, likewise, these commercial routes could have functioned as broadcasters of images (Fredell 2010).

The 'rías' and rock art in late prehistory

There have been very few studies which have attempted to explain the distribution of Atlantic rock art in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. One of the first hypotheses in this respect came from Bradley *et al.* (1995). This study discussed the question of the coincidence between the area in which the carvings are located and the climatic area of the Rías Baixas, four bays situated along the western coast of Galicia, which provides particularly favourable conditions for agriculture. This circumstance would favour a high density of population which, according to that article, would have generated a high degree of competition for the use of some very productive resources, although they were limited due to the scarcity of pasture and agricultural land, thus leading to the necessity to regulate access to the aforementioned resources, a role which would have been performed by the rock art. It has been noted that there was a high density of domestic settlements in the Rías Baixas vicinity in late prehistory. However, this density cannot only be explained by climatic factors due to the fact that one of the defining elements of this region is its close relationship with the sea, both as a source of food and a means of communication (Santos-Estévez and Seoane-Veiga 2006). The latter factor has turned these bays, and their immediate surroundings, into an extremely dynamic area as far as the incorporation of cultural innovations is concerned.

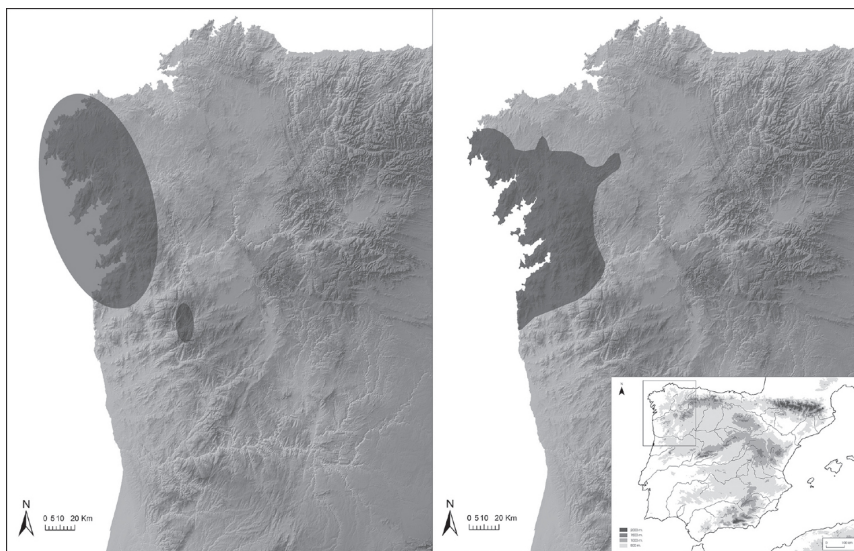


Fig. 12.1. Left: Distribution of the 'seseo' in Galicia. Right: Distribution of rock art depicting weapons and location of the area of study on the Iberian Peninsula.

The 'rías' of Galicia form a peculiar aspect of the Iberian Atlantic coast. On the one hand, the Portuguese coast is predominantly straight, meaning that the main ports are located at the mouths of rivers. The fact that the coast faces the open sea means that there are not many natural points of refuge for seafarers. On the other hand, the Cantabrian coast outside of Galicia is more irregular than the Portuguese coastline, but does not possess many natural harbours either. Rather, small bays and river estuaries are used for that purpose. In summary then, the north-west of Iberia is flanked by two long *uncongenial* coasts (Cunliffe 1999: 94). The natural features of the Rías Baixas have created favourable conditions for short-distance transit between the differing communities situated on their shores. Likewise, for any seafarer coming from the south of the Iberian Peninsula the rías would have been a refuge and an almost obligatory stopping place. Its distinction as a strategic enclave would have been enhanced by the fact that Galicia is situated at a crossing point between the north and south Atlantic (Cunliffe 1999: 2).

A fact which can help us understand the importance of the sea as a means of communication is the curious coincidence which exists between the distribution of Atlantic rock art and a linguistic phenomenon known as the 'seseo'. This phonetic variant, which is characteristic of western Galician (Fig. 12.1), is defined by the presence of an /s/ in the same positions in which common Galician has a /θ/, in words such as *cen* (hundred) and *cazar* (to hunt).

This phonetic variant is known among some ethnographers as seaman's Galician, thus giving us a clue as to what might have been the determining factor in the distribution of this phenomenon. Until the car became widely used in the second half of the twentieth century, the quickest means of transport in the Rías Baixas was by boat. This fact favoured contact between coastal populations and caused some cultural features to extend along the rías whilst being almost non-existent

inland. It must have been this circumstance which facilitated the extension of the seseo all along the western coast south of Cape Fisterra. This same factor, the presence of the sea as a means of transit, could also have had an influence on the distribution of some archaeological phenomena, such as the Rías Baixas-type pottery in the Iron Age (Rey Castiñeira 1991), the presence of some elements of the material culture in the First Iron Age (González Ruibal 2006: 255–266), or the distribution of the rock art of 4000 years ago. As far as coastal navigation as a means of transport in Late Prehistory, more specifically in the first millennium BC, is concerned, it is necessary to point out parallels between the western coast of Scandinavia (Bohuslän-Østfold) and the western coast of Galicia (Bertilsson 1987; Ling 2008). Both areas have a very similar type of coastline, i.e. extremely irregular, with many capes and bays. Both areas are granitic and mountainous, and both are notable for the abundance of rock carvings which are distributed along the same coastline length: 150 km.

Focusing exclusively on the Bronze Age (2400–800 BC), we can propose that the distribution of the rock carvings in this period could have been influenced by the following factors: the presence of granite,¹ the climatic conditions, the availability of land, the density of population, cultural tradition and, most notably, accessibility to the coast.

The chronological development of Atlantic rock art

In previous articles, as a result of integrating the information currently available on the subject, a new periodization for rock art was proposed (Santos-Estévez 2005a; 2008; Santos-Estévez and Seoane-Veiga 2010). The data which we possess allow us to present chronological limits for Atlantic rock art which are essentially different from the dating proposed by other authors, such as Peña Santos and Rey García (1993; 2001) and Costas Goberna *et al.* (2006), who consider this group of rock art to belong exclusively to the Bronze Age. Taking into account the information available, the existence of a style or Atlantic tradition of rock art over a period of 3000 years is proposed. Due to limited space, only a brief overview of the new framework is presented here, while further details may be found in the publications noted above.

First Period

The presence of complex circular designs of wide and deep grooves with considerable formal variety. The identifiable designs are basically combinations of concentric circles, irregular spaces delimited by grooves and full of dots, groups of dots occupying spaces made up of figures and sinuous and irregular lines.

This type of carving is found in the north of the British Isles and in the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula. In the latter area, they are distributed around the north-west of Portugal and most of Galicia, although there is a higher concentration in the western half. Their chronology could range from the beginning of the third millennium until the beginning of the second millennium, although it is possible that their origins could date back to the fourth millennium (Alves 2008: 407). Although the possibility of its continuity throughout the second millennium should not be completely discarded, this hypothesis deals with the matter of the production of rock art and not its use, which could have a broader

timespan. Bradley proposes that carvings with circular designs prevailed from the Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age (Bradley 1997: 140–150). Indeed, at the beginning of the Bronze Age a series of visible social changes in transformations of burials and in domestic settlements took place which, in the end, led to the disappearance of rock carvings in the British Isles.

Second Period

Composed of petroglyphs with carvings of weapons, especially triangular-bladed daggers, short swords, halberds and ‘scutiforms’. These compositions tend to comprise monothematic panels in which figures of other periods of the Atlantic Style, such as circular designs or zoomorphs, rarely occur (Bradley 1998: 249). These carvings are located exclusively in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. The chronology of the large majority of the engraved weapons relates to a period between the middle of the third millennium and the middle of the second millennium BC. This group of carvings, and those included in the third period, are not present in the British Isles.

Third Period

This includes practically all the quadrupeds, above all deer and horses. Panels are composed of narrative scenes. It also includes labyrinths and some circular designs. During this period, smooth regular rock surfaces were used as well as slopes and even vertical areas. Other minority designs were incorporated including triskelions, swastikas and so-called shovels. These rock carvings are located mainly in the western half of Galicia and on the Portuguese side of the Miño estuary. The chronology of this phase would belong to the first half of the first millennium, although its survival into the second half cannot be discounted.

The analysis that follows concentrates solely on the carvings of weapons from the Bronze Age, all of which may be classified to the Second Period.

Technical aspects for spatial analysis

A starting point for the study is the fact that the capacity to structure a territory depends, largely, on the possibilities that individuals have of moving around the said area. For this reason, the analysis of mobility and its conditioning factors play a significant role when it comes to approaching the way a community articulates a territory and, in our case, the possible relationship that exists between the location of the carvings and accessibility and control of the coast.

In order to analyse mobility, two basic elements are necessary. On the one hand, the effort needed to travel around the territory must be characterised. For this purpose we have used GIS tools. On the other hand, a series of starting points must be examined, which in this case are the locations of the carvings that function as nodes for the calculation of optimal paths (Wheatley and Gillings 2002: 157–158) and isochrones (Fábrega-Álvarez 2004: 19).

GIS tools have shown their potential for carrying out analyses relating to the question of mobility in past times in various studies. This is a fairly well developed field within the realm of geospatial technology applications in archaeology, both in its theoretical and practical formulations (Lock 2000; Van Leusen 2002; Fairén

Jiménez *et al.* 2006; Fábrega-Álvarez and Parcero-Oubiña 2007; Llobera *et al.* 2011; Howey 2011). The fundamental concepts in an analysis of these characteristics are the slope, the cost and the accumulated cost (Wheatley and Gillings 2002: 151–156).

The method used here in an attempt to approach the question of mobility is, in essence, that proposed by Fábrega-Álvarez and Parcero-Oubiña (2007) and used previously by one of the present authors (Guimil-Fariña 2009). In this case, we took a DEM (digital elevation model) referring to Galicia and the north of Portugal which came from the ASTER₂ (Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer) project developed by NASA and the Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry of Japan.

From the DEM, a thorough series of calculations were carried out in order to achieve a map of relative accumulated cost for each of the petroglyph sites. This process and its theoretical background have been meticulously detailed in the studies mentioned above. For this reason, only the cost is calculated here since it is a more determinant preparatory step when it comes to calculating the cumulative cost.

It is necessary to take into account the gradients obtained directly from the DEM as conditioning factors in the calculation of the cost, understanding that the greater the slope, the more effort is needed to travel over it. There is a wide range of differing proposals of algorithms to transform the values of slopes into values of displacement cost (see for example Tobler 1993; Bell and Lock 2000). For the purpose of this study, we have opted for the former due to isotropic considerations as the routes analysed in this study have no predetermined outward and return tracks.

Apart from the slopes, the other conditioning factor which has been taken into account is the areas of water accumulation. We have calculated a cumulative hydrographic network from the DEM, which we then used with a penalising purpose for displacement by assigning the whole network a single value of 15° of inclination added to the pre-existing value on the gradient map. Taking the result of this addition, the cost was calculated reflecting the effort needed for displacement.

Taking into account the cost and the nodes, the optimal routes have been calculated, itineraries which link two or more sites following the least costly route in terms of effort, in our case between the rock carvings and the coastline, as well as the cumulative cost, and by doing that, the isochrones, with regard to the location of each rock carving.

In order to study the relationship between the location and the coast, we have carried out an analysis of the visibility from the site of each rock carving. The objective of this analysis is to find out whether visual control of the territory from the rock sites with weapon motifs reflects in any way their relation to the coast or the sea. This information was then crossed with that derived from the calculations regarding accessibility to the coast. As this type of analysis has become extremely common in the field of archaeology since the introduction of GIS tools it is not necessary to go into detail describing them, but the reader is simply referred to the specialised literature (see above) for a more detailed description of their methodology and uses.

Lastly, we would like to highlight the fact that the results and conclusions

obtained via these GIS analyses must always be evaluated within the limits of the analytical context and the procedures employed (the previously mentioned GIS procedures, the characteristics and scale of the DEM, the criteria for data treatment, etc.).

The social landscape of rock carvings depicting weapons

During the transition between the first and second periods of the Atlantic Style, possibly about the second half of the third millennium, the area of distribution of the rock carvings became significantly restricted. Carvings from the First Period can be found from the northern coast of Galicia right down to the Douro or perhaps Vouga river in Portugal and from the Atlantic coast to the central mountain ranges of Portugal and those in the east of Galicia (Figs 12.1 and 12.2). During the Second Period, the distribution of the rock carvings became reduced to the area of the Rías Baixas and their immediate surroundings. Their limits could be defined between the cape of Fisterra, situated on the northwestern coast, and the mouth of the River Miño on the Portuguese border and between the western coast and the Dorsal Meridiana mountain range that separates the interior and the coastal regions (Santos-Estévez 2012). During the Third Period, in the first millennium BC, the distribution of the Atlantic rock carvings becomes even more confined to the coastline.

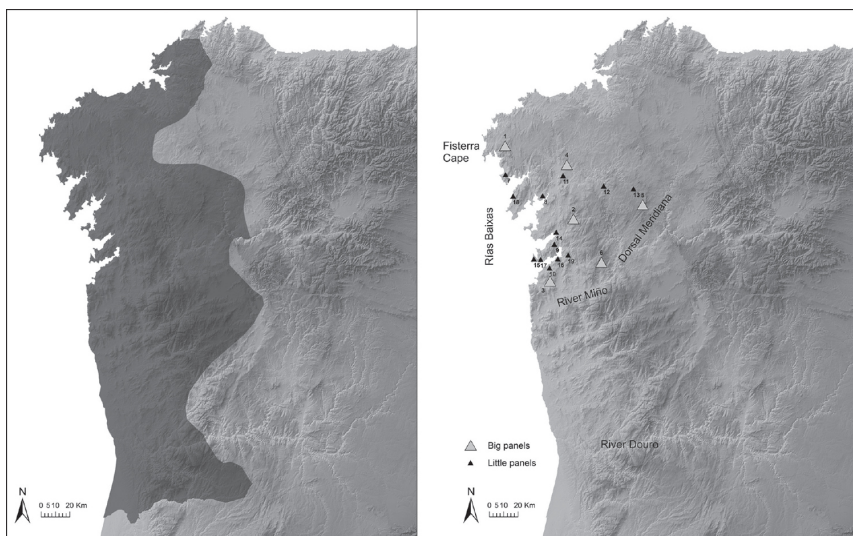


Fig. 12.2. Left: distribution of Atlantic rock art in the First Period during the Neolithic. Right: Distribution of rock art depicting Bronze Age weapons during the Second Period. Carvings mentioned in this paper: 1) Pedra Ancha; 3) Laxe de Sárdoma; 5) Coto das Laxas; 6) Cavadiña; 7) Rego Lamoso; 8) Foxa Vella; 10) Pedra das Procesións; 11) Outeiro do Corno; 12) Primadorno; 13) Namelas; 14) Montecelo; 15) Mogüelos; 16) Poza da Lagoa; 18) Beira da Costa; 19) Amoedo.

The transition between the first and second periods of Atlantic rock art

coincided with the beginning of the production of metal objects in the north-west and with the emergence of fortified settlements, such as those in El Pedroso, Zambujal and Vila Nova de São Pedro, to cite just a few of those closest to our area of study, which have an especially high concentration around the Tagus estuary. From the second half of the third millennium BC, Atlantic rock art seems to have disappeared in the British Isles and to have undergone a significant iconographic transformation in the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula with circular combinations being substituted by depictions of weapons, most of which can be dated between the end of the third and the beginning of the second millennia. This drastic reduction in the extension of the *territory* of Atlantic rock art could have been one of the many consequences of the changes associated with the beginning of the production of metal objects and the increase in Atlantic trade relations.

We believe it is necessary to present some aspects relating to our conception of the symbolic and social role that rock carvings could have played during the Bronze Age. As far as iconography is concerned, it can be said that there are three types of weapons represented in the carvings: swords, daggers and halberds. The absence of clear representations of axes in the rock art of the Atlantic Style must be noted. The axe seems to have been used for specifically productive tasks, such as tree felling or woodwork, or even as an object to be exchanged in trade as ingots. This last possibility would explain the great abundance of axes and palstaves in deposits and their total absence in rock art, a field which we can interpret as having strong symbolic and ritual content. With regard to this question, and specifically relating to the Late Bronze Age, E. Galán and M. Ruiz-Gálvez propose the possibility that axes represented 'bronze in circulation', whereas weapons were associated with the ritual world (Galán and Ruiz-Gálvez 1996: 161). The link between rock carvings depicting weapons and the ritual realm has been pointed out by Vázquez Varela (1995, 1997) when he indicates that at least some rock carvings, perhaps the most monumental ones, could have functioned as aggregation sites and/or places for the celebration of rites of passage. As far as this possibility is concerned, the apparent disconnection of rock carvings depicting weapons with contemporary domestic settlements should be noted. The archaeological site of O Fixón, which is relatively close to the Mogüelos rock carving, could be considered, but the results of the excavations carried out do not show any type of structures (García-Lastra Merino 1984) and the pollen analyses reveal no evidence of agricultural practices (López García 1984). Therefore, it is possible to suppose that this settlement was associated with activities related to the sea. This dissociation between great concentrations of rock carvings and domestic areas has also been documented in similar social contexts in regions such as Scandinavia. In other cases, settlements which can be related to aggregation sites and/or fishing activity have been documented (Bengtsson and Ling 2007; Nilsson 2010). Returning to the north-west of Iberia, the studies carried out in Campo Lameiro showed the absence of agricultural activity in the surroundings of the rock carvings and excavations in nearby areas have located hardly any fragments of pottery, or indeed the total lack of them. However, some structures dating back to the Mesolithic to modern times have been found, whose use was probably not domestic given the lack of evidence which could be related to the normal activity of a domestic settlement (Kaal *et al.* 2013). The dissociation of the rock art of late prehistory with domestic areas also seems clear among rock

art depicting weapons and domestic settlements of the Bronze Age. This hypothesis could be supported by the fact that rock art usually reflects the type of activities carried out in its surroundings in its iconography; this has been argued in the case of the panels with hunting scenes in the northwest of Iberia (Santos 2005b). Another example of the direct relationship between iconography and setting can be found in Scandinavia, where the depictions of boats right on the coastline in the second and first millennia BC are particularly eloquent (Ling 2008). In this article, we are inclined to follow Vázquez Varela's proposal in considering that at least the larger panels were sites of special ritual significance, associated with aggregation sites for warriors. They could, therefore, have played an important role as far as social cohesion is concerned. On the other hand, the smaller panels could have been linked to places where ritual depositions of weapons would have taken place. In this respect, the discovery of a weapons deposit dating from the beginning of the Bronze Age in the immediate surroundings of a rock carving with the same type of artefacts engraved must be highlighted (Bradley 1998). Kristiansen (1998: 58–61) points out that in tribal systems, in which political power is dispersed, direct control of territory does not go beyond a local level. In order to transcend this limit, the main integrating mechanism sanctioning all types of social, economic and military transactions is ritual.

Visibility and accessibility to the coast

The initial intention of this work was to study the relationship between rock carvings depicting weapons and overland routes, but the analyses seemed to show that this relationship was only partial; a large number of the rock carvings were located away from long distance routes. In the cases in which a relationship with land routes was observed, this was always connected to ways which linked the interior with the coast. Below, we shall observe, in addition to this circumstance, other factors which allow us to propose the connection between rock carvings depicting weapons and the coast, for example the proximity to the coast and visibility over the bays.

If we observe the distribution of Atlantic art in the northwest of Iberia, we notice straight away that the areas with great concentrations of carvings, such as O Mauxo, Campo Lameiro and the Barbanza Peninsula, are located less than 20 km from the coast. However, if we limit the sample to carvings depicting weapons, the distance to the coast is even less. There are 34 rocks distributed across 19 sites; only four are more than 25 km away from the coast and none is more than 65 km away. The most frequent distance from the coast is less than 9 km.

On the other hand, the existing link between the locations of some of the carvings depicting weapons and the coast can also be explained by questions of accessibility. We have the case of Pena Ancha (Dumbría), which is located on the pilgrim route from Santiago to Cape Fisterra at exactly the point from which the coast first becomes visible. The view over the bay of Baiona is impressive from the vicinity of Pedra das Procesións. The site of Amoedo is situated on a mountain pass which acts as a gateway between the interior and the coast less than 5 km away. There definitely seem to be two types of carvings depending on the distance from the coast. The first type is located a short distance from the coast, with views across a beach or bay, whereas the second type tends to be located some distance

from the coast, without visibility – or at the precise limit of visibility – of the coast. Here we are referring to key points for transit or on routes linking the interior with the coast (Fig. 12.3).

In addition, there seems to be a certain systematic relationship between the iconography of the panels and their location at specific points around the rias. In this way, in the rias of Vigo, Pontevedra and Arousa, panels can be observed at the end of the rias, more specifically at the mouth of the principal river. The sites in question are those of Poza da Lagoa, Montecelo and Foxa Vella respectively. All three are composed of daggers and halberds and are situated at high sites, from which it is possible to see the interior of the ría and, in the case of Poza da Lagoa, the view across practically all the ría is impressive (see Fig. 12.9). The connection between iconography and location can also be seen in the carvings most distant from inland, Rego Lamoso, Beira da Costa and Mogüelos, where halberds are absent; the number of daggers is fewer and the view is orientated towards the entrance and towards the outside of the rias (Fig. 12.4).

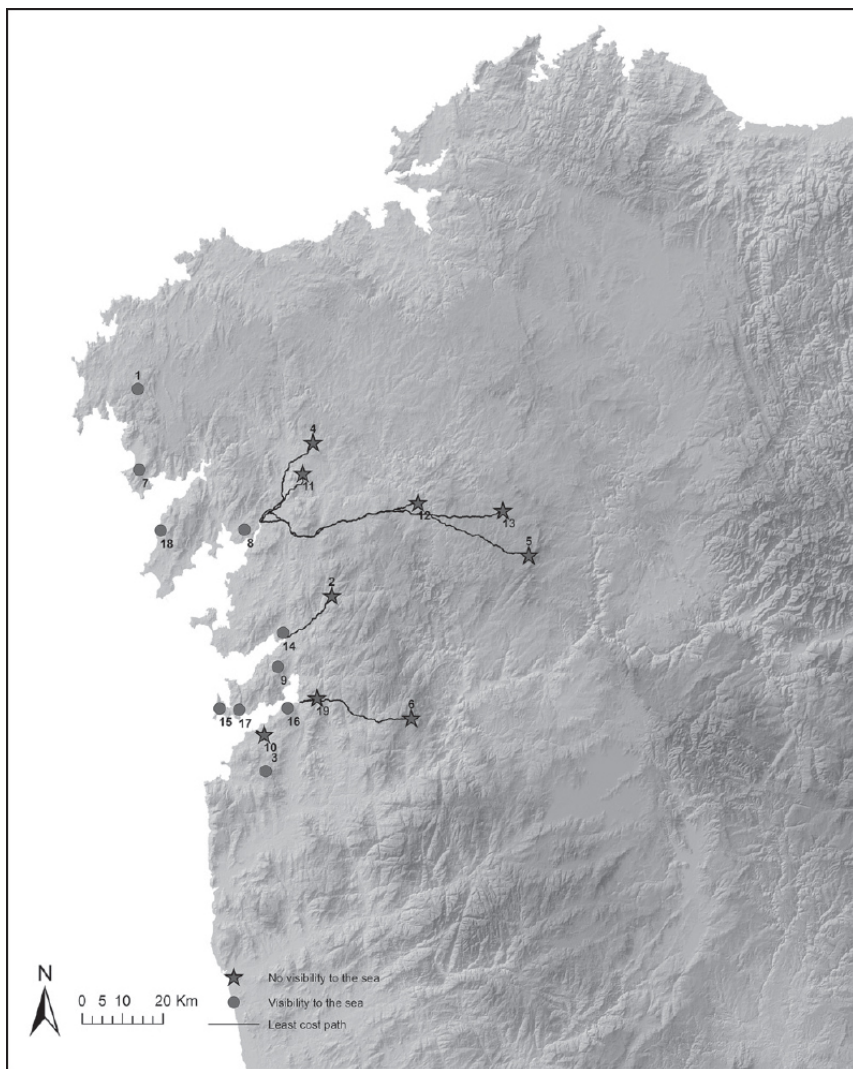


Fig. 12.3. Routes to the coast from the inland carvings. At the end of the routes, at the coast, there are carvings with the same iconography: daggers and halberds in passive position.

We have observed how a large number of the rock carvings of weapons are not only situated close to the coast, but also that they command good views over the sea. In some cases, they visually dominate specific beaches, to which they have easy access. This is the case of Rego Lamoso with the beach of Carnota, Laxe da Chan with Rodeira beach and of Foxa Vella with the bay of Rial (Fig. 12.5).³ In general, rock art which is closest to the coast normally has good access to a beach or small bay into which a stream flows and from which access to the interior is easy. Beaches in areas with cliffs, in unprotected areas or areas without a source of

fresh water, seem to have been rejected. Definitively, many of the rock carvings of weapons are in locations associated with a beach with natural conditions which allow for its use as a port. In some cases, this possibility could be corroborated by the archaeological record, as in the case of the concentration of Early Bronze Age pottery of O Fixón, situated 600 m to the south of Mogüelos and next to the beach of Barra, a site about which we have already speculated on its probable non-domestic use.

Definitively, from the systematic relationship between the iconography of the panel and its location with regard to the coast, a generic pattern can be extracted which we can define as follows:

1. a vertical panel representing a procession of weapons with daggers, halberds, 'scutiforms' and stelae. This rock carving is situated inland and does not have the best view of the rías but is linked to an optimal route towards the coast.
2. a horizontal panel representing a weapons deposit with daggers and halberds in passive position. This rock carving is situated at the end of the ría with a view of its interior.
3. a horizontal panel in which a dagger is represented. This rock carving is located at the entrance of the ría with good visibility around it and across the open sea.

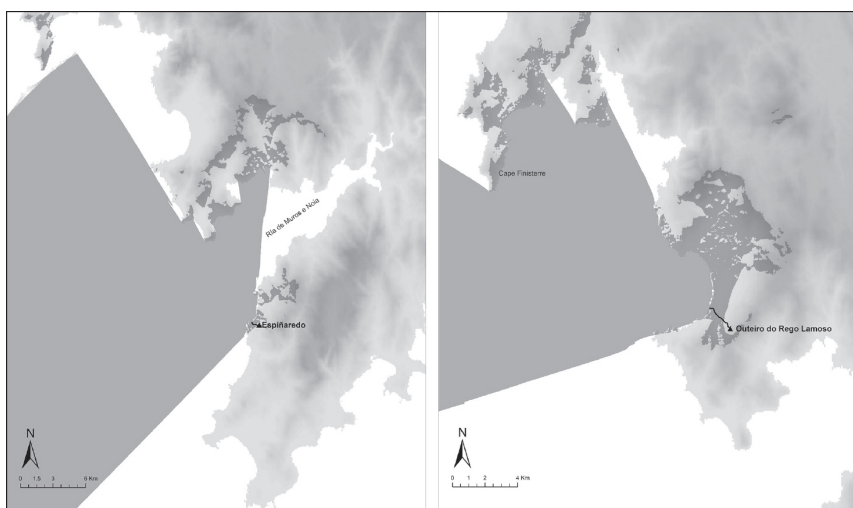


Fig. 12.4. Espiñaredo and Rego Lamoso. Visibility towards the entrance and the outside of the rías and accessibility to beaches.

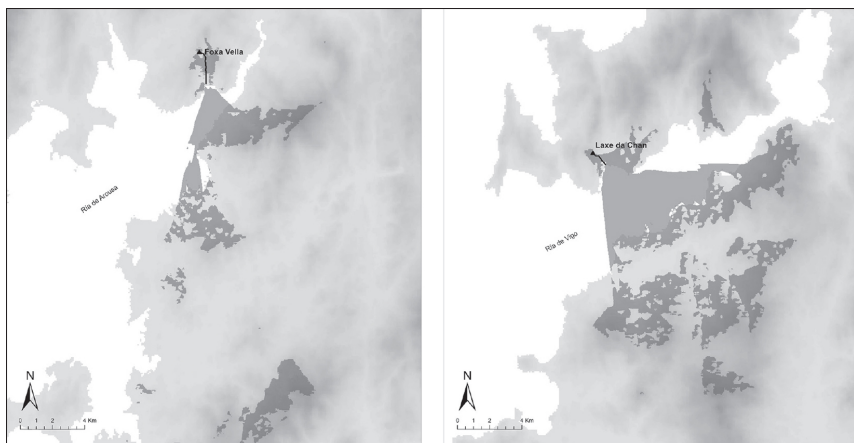


Fig. 12.5. Foza Vella and Laxe da Chan. Visibility across the interior of the rias and accessibility to beaches protected from the open sea by a cape located to the west.

Visual control over the coast in the Ría de Vigo

Following a general outline of the association of rock carvings depicting weapons with the coast, and given that it is not possible to go into detail for each of the cases in this article, we shall concentrate on the Ría de Vigo. The abundance of carvings of weapons in this area allows us to analyse in more detail the characteristics of their location. The two sides of the ría contain a total of four sites of carvings of weapons with a view across the Ría: Os Mogüelos (Cangas), Laxe da Chan (Cangas), Poza da Lagoa (Redondela) and Pedra das Procesións (Gondomar). Another site in the area is that of Laxe de Sárdoma (Vigo), from which it is not possible to see the sea. This is a rock carving which is associated with a transit route towards the sea, which became an historic route beginning in the episcopal see of Tui and ending in the port of Vigo.

Almost all of the ría is included in the visual field of one of the rock carvings in the area, with the exception of the bay of San Simón, although perhaps this bay as we know it may not have existed in the Early Bronze Age (Rey Salgado 1993, quoted by Fábregas 2001). The rock carvings are located close to the coast in places that are sufficiently elevated to enable a view over a wide area of the sea. It could be thought that the only way to define a direct relationship with the sea is by proximity, but better visibility of the coast is not obtained from the beaches, but rather from the nearby hills.⁴

The four sites with views over the coast concentrate their visual field over some of the sectors of the ría in a complementary way, so that between all of the rock carvings, they cover practically all of the ría (Fig. 12.6). Another characteristic which defines their visibility is that each site overlooks the nearest beach or natural harbour. This is the case in Mogüelos with Barra beach, Laxe de Chan with the modern day port of Cangas, Poza da Lagoa with Area Longa beach and Pedra das Procesións with the bay of Baiona. All of these cases are beaches with freshwater streams or small bays protected from the wind and the currents of the open sea by the presence of a cape situated to the west of the natural harbour. In

fact, all of these natural harbours were ancient port areas.

The situation of the sites in the Ría de Vigo seems to follow a pattern determined by the question of access to natural harbours and visual control over the maritime traffic in the interior of the Ría.

The Rías Baixas have historically been an area linked to maritime trade with the south of the Peninsula and with the Mediterranean from late prehistory to the beginning of the Middle Ages. Indeed, travel by boat must have been what enabled the earliest contacts with the Mediterranean peoples. The *Ora Marítima*, from the fourth century AD, which included sources from the fourth century BC, is testimony to this fact. In addition, book III of Strabo's *Geographica*, based on sources from the second century BC, is particularly detailed in its description of the coast, especially compared to the sparseness of its detail on the interior of Galicia. Contact with the south of the Peninsula, at least from the Iron Age, seems to be corroborated by the archaeological record (González Ruibal 2006: 243), although we believe that this contact could date back to the Late Bronze Age if it is true that the deposits of palstaves, which are so abundant in the Rías Baixas, represent bronze for trade or exchange. On the other hand, if we refer to the second half of the second millennium BC, we can mention the presence of a rock carving with a depiction of a Mediterranean boat in Oia on the south-west coast of Galicia, which Ruíz-Gálvez has interpreted as a Post-Mycenaean Aegean boat (Ruíz-Gálvez Priego 2008).

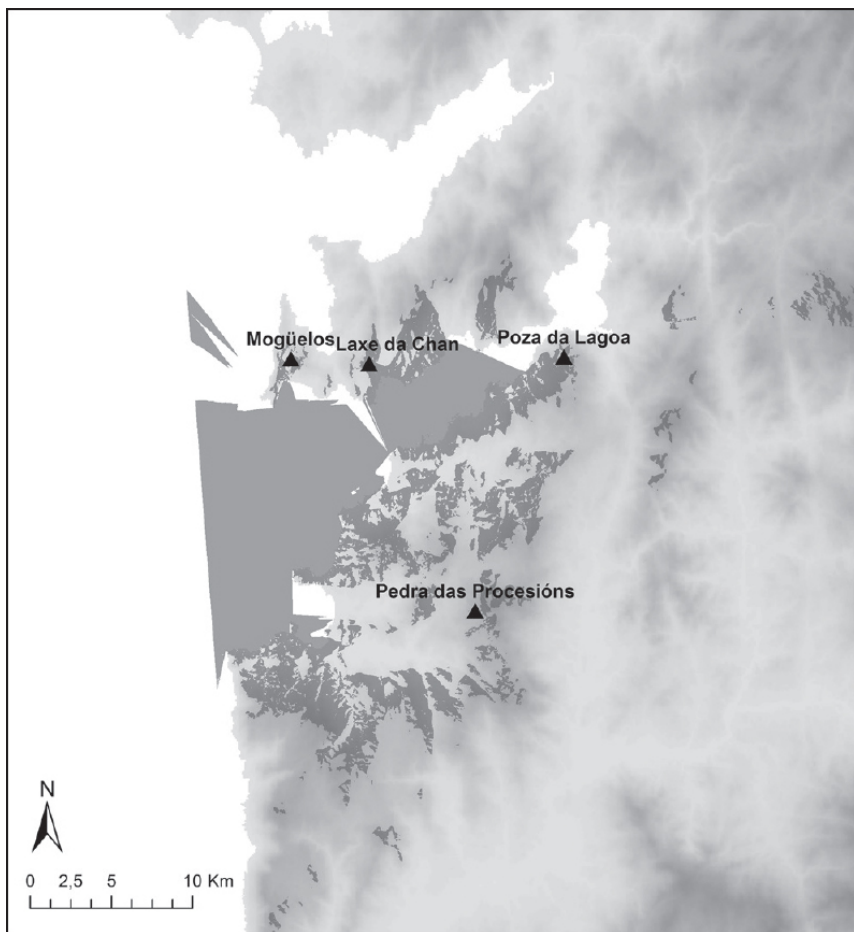


Fig. 12.6. View of the Ría de Vigo and possible natural harbours. The total area of visibility from the rock carvings covers practically all of the ria.

Evidence which could point towards the existence of contact during the Early Bronze Age with more southern areas (even outside the Peninsula), can be found in the High Atlas area of Morocco where panels have been documented depicting Bronze Age weapons with very similar compositions compared to those in the northwest of Iberia. In the Yagour region (Rodrigue 2009) several rock carvings have been found depicting daggers associated with rectangular figures forming compositions similar to those found in Outeiro do Corno and Peña Tú (Fig. 12.7). Indeed, this latter carving, in Asturias, has a pattern of location which is similar to the Galician weapons carvings. That is to say, it is located in an area close to the coast and in an elevated position, which permits great visibility over the sea.

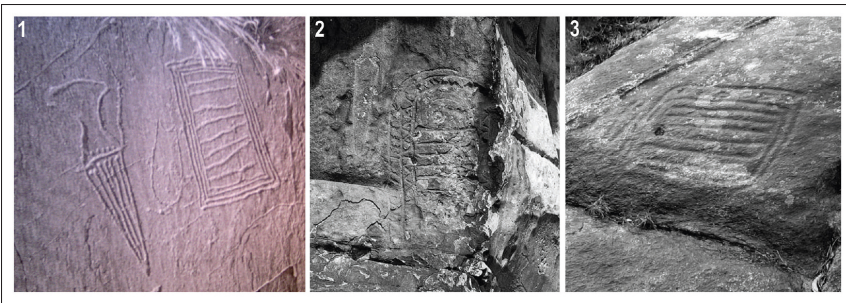


Fig. 12.7. Iconographic parallels: 1. Moroccan Atlas (Rodrigue 2009); 2. Outeiro do Corno (Galicia); 3. Peña Tú (Asturias). In all three cases there is a quadrangular figure framed and decorated with parallel lines, on his right a dagger with the point down. The example from Outeiro do Corno has a second dagger between the first weapon and the square figure with the point up.

In accordance with our own chronological proposal, it is necessary to point out that an important iconographic change took place in rock art in the Bronze Age. More typically Atlantic compositions, basically cup-and-rings like those in the British Isles, were abandoned and compositions with certain similarities to those in the French Maritime Alps and those of Valcamonica were adopted, with panels made up of ensembles of halberds and daggers without human figures holding them, thus making the weapon the absolute protagonist of the scene.

This iconographic change could be related to a reorientation in long-distance relations which would favour the concentration of rock art around the natural harbours that provided easiest access to the southernmost areas of the Peninsula, as is the case of the Rías Baixas and the Tagus estuary. In any case, the process which led to this change in the location of rock art and its iconographic and compositional repertoire deserves its own study and monograph.

Conclusions: rock art as an articulator of territory

We have attempted to define some of the factors that may have influenced or even governed the distribution of Atlantic rock art on a regional level. In order to do this, it is necessary to delimit and define the type of rock art being studied. This aspect is especially important when dealing with rock art, due to the fact that the more heterogeneous the sample to be analysed, the more diffuse the results, whilst the more homogeneous samples provide more precise results. Therefore, we believe that it is important to begin carrying out work aimed at the study of rock carvings from specific periods and with a specific iconography. For this reason, this study has been limited to only those carvings that can be dated to the Bronze Age which depict weapons. These carvings seem to have a connection to the sea, more specifically with the estuaries and natural harbours of the Rías Baixas (Fig. 12.8). However, it should be noted that with this connection other possible factors influencing their location have not been exhausted. Having analysed the accessibility to and visibility over the rias, it seems that the principal motivation for this connection to the sea was the control of transport and transit by sea. The situation of the carvings depicting weapons gives priority, on the one hand, to visibility so that these locations provide good visual control over beaches where

the conditions are favourable for functioning as ports. In addition, the sites have a commanding general view over the rías.

On the other hand, access to the natural harbours and communications between the coast and the interior seem to have been important questions, as is the case with Coto das Laxas, Namelas and Primadorno. However, although they are relatively distant from the sea, these sites are always situated to the west of the mountain ranges that separate western and eastern Galicia. That is to say that they are never located beyond the principal obstacle which would make access to the coast difficult: the Dorsal Meridiana mountain range. This physical barrier seems to be what demarcated the area of distribution of Atlantic rock art from the Bronze Age onwards. Also, these somewhat more interior carvings are related to routes which head towards the coast from the interior. The way in which the carvings could have helped to structure the territory would have been via signposting and by signifying places which functioned in their time as aggregation sites (Fig. 12.9). The presence of monuments in certain places would be a way of materializing memory, thus producing tradition and consolidating links between groups within the same community and between this community and the wider territory.



Fig. 12.8. Above: position of Foxa Vella and view over the sea in Ría de Arousa. Below: position of Rego Lamoso and view over Carnota beach and Cape Fisterra.

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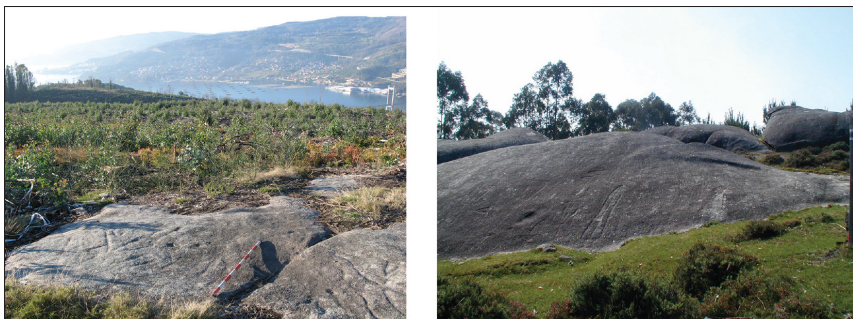


Fig. 12.9. Left: View of Ría de Vigo from Poza da Lagoa. Right: a possible aggregation site by the monumental panel of Pedra das Procesiões.

Notes

- 1 The structure of granite allows for the production of figures of great expressiveness as is characteristic of the Atlantic Style.
- 2 ASTER: <http://asterweb.jpl.nasa.gov/>. Consulted on 4 July 2012.
- 3 In the case of Foxa Vella and its surroundings, a detailed study on ritual activity materialised in metallic deposits throughout the Bronze Age highlights the helmet of Leiro, which the author considers to be an imported object (Comendador Rey 2010).
- 4 We could compare it to the location of the cairns in Bohuslän, which are in hills on the coast, while rock carvings of the same region are along the ancient shoreline.

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13. Rock art as history – representations of human images from an historical perspective

Peter Skoglund

This paper explores and discusses Scandinavian rock art from an historical perspective. Drawing on evidence from south-east Scania in the Early Bronze Age, this paper argues that rock art primarily had an integrative function in rituals, where the axe was an important symbol representing a broad aspect of society. The material from northern Bohuslän dating to the Late Bronze Age points in another direction; by the use of various attributes attached to human images different social roles are expressed in a much more straightforward way. It is argued that this reflects a larger trend in Europe around 800 BC, when certain groups in society reinvented the tradition of using representations of humans in art to manifest aristocratic ideals.

KEYWORDS: rock art, human images, Hallstatt culture, initiation rites

Introduction

This paper explores and discusses Scandinavian rock art from an historical perspective. Scandinavian rock art was produced for a period of 1500 years, and according to the recent chronologies its production started c. 1700 BC and ended c. 200 BC (Ling 2008).

In a Scandinavian setting this period covers the very onset of the Bronze Age and the earliest Iron Age, while in a central European context it is contemporary with the Bronze Age Tumulus and Urnfield cultures and the Iron Age Hallstatt cultures. During this period the Mediterranean saw the rise and fall of Mycenae, the birth of Classical Greece and the establishment and initial expansion of the Roman Empire.

Thus, rock art was produced over a very long span of time, inviting us to consider how these images related to different kinds of contexts and historical settings. However, despite the very long tradition of making rock art, the images

have rarely been discussed from an historical perspective where changes in rock art are related to societal transformations or different historical epochs.

The reluctance to link rock art to societal changes is probably due to the dominant research trend of the twentieth century, which viewed rock art as a ritual expression with little or no relevance to the understanding of other aspects of society (Almgren 1927). Recently, this situation has changed as new works have been published underlining the social character of rock art and its intimate connection with a maritime society (Ling 2008; 2012; Ling and Cornell 2010; Skoglund 2012). New perspectives are opening up, and there is now potential to view rock art as part of specific historical environments, and thus responding to societal changes.

It is of course difficult to grasp overall patterns and changes in the very long tradition of Scandinavian rock art. In this paper the strategy is to discuss and evaluate two regions which differ in time and place. The first case to be discussed is south-east Scania in southern Sweden, while the other is northern Bohuslän, on the west coast of Sweden. Both regions are interesting from the perspective of historical change, as each is a home to rock art that covers the whole period from the onset of the Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age.

However, the material is far more plentiful in Bohuslän than in Scania. Furthermore, while the majority of the Scanian rock art was created in the Early Bronze Age, most rock art in Bohuslän was made in the Late Bronze Age. In the forthcoming study both regions will be discussed taking a long-term perspective. However, for Scania the discussion will focus on the Early Bronze Age, whereas the focus for Bohuslän is on the Late Bronze Age.

Below, the various functions of rock art in the Early and the Late Bronze Ages will be discussed. It will be argued that rock art was used in a range of social strategies and held slightly different functions in society depending on time and place. Finally, an attempt is made to evaluate these results against the background of the general development of rock art in Scandinavia and how it relates to a wider European framework.

South-east Scania – the Early Bronze Age

In eastern Scania, in an area of not more than 5×5 km, there exists a concentration of rock art that in certain respects lacks counterparts elsewhere in Scandinavia. Of particular note is the large concentration of axes in comparison to other regions.

The most prominent site is Simrishamn 23. This site encompasses 18×8 m and includes depictions of c. 50 axes, c. 45 ships, 13 circle motifs, 5 wagon-motifs, 4 human figures, 3 animals, an image interpreted as the outline of a cape, c. 40 cupmarks and numerous indistinct motifs lacking an obvious interpretation (FMIS). The panel has a prominent and public position located very close to the shoreline. However, the maritime setting was even more pronounced during the Early Bronze Age, when the water level stood c. 2 m higher than today (Mörner *et al.* 2009).

The majority of the axes depicted on the panel have a flared edge, which is characteristic for flanged axes (dated to Late Neolithic II–Bronze Age period I, c. 1950–1500 BC) (Althin 1945; Almgren 1987).

Within this group of axes, Bertil Almgren identified two sub-groups: one with extended pointed edges on either side of the blade, often hafted in a slightly bent shaft, and another type with a less pronounced blade, often hafted in a straight shaft (1987: 38). While the latter cannot be dated more precisely than 1950–1500 BC, the first type of axe is similar to axes found in south Scandinavia, which Helle Vandkilde defined as of a pseudo-Irish type. These axes resemble contemporary Irish axes, but judging from metal analysis they are made locally (Vandkilde's type A8; Vandkilde 1996:83ff).

The dating of this kind of axe is within the latest part of the Late Neolithic or around 1700 BC. This dating accords well with the dating of the oldest ship images at the site, which are of the Rörby-type and can be dated to Montelius period I, 1700–1500 BC. However, a few ships, two shaft-hole axes, a horse figure and the mantle figure were probably added in Montelius period II or III, 1500–1100 BC.

From these observations an overall dating of the site to 1700–1100 BC seems reasonable, although the majority of the images would have been produced in the first part of this period, 1700–1500 BC.



Fig. 13.1. Human image holding an axe, Simrishamn RAÄ 23, Scania. Photo: Catarina Bertilsson.

The axes are of actual size and depict axes known from the archaeological record (Vandkilde 1996). However, the axes are not a random selection, but many of them have a pronounced and flared edge. This outline refers to an international style, known in a limited numbers in south Scandinavia, but found in greater quantities in Ireland, the UK and in the Netherlands (Megaw and Hardy 1938).

It is therefore not the practical use of axes that is highlighted on the panel, but

rather the social and ritual significance of these kinds of axes. In three cases the axes are directly associated with humans. On these occasions the axes are depicted in their actual size while the man is portrayed as a miniature, giving the observer an idea of the very importance of the axe in relation to the man (Althin 1945: Taf. 5) (Fig. 13.1).

The relationship between man and the axes is even more pronounced at the nearby panel Simrishamn 15 situated at a sloop c. 500 m from the sea. The site encompass 20 × 15 m and includes 27 ships, 7 axes, 45 circle motifs, 4 human figures, 7 cupmarks and a couple of unidentifiable figures (FMIS). Three of these axes are attached to a human figure of the same appearance and size as those at Simrishamn 23. Close to these is another axe, and these four axes are arranged in pairs opposing each other (Althin 1945: Taf. 18, 20). The way the axes are arranged in two opposing pairs provides yet another perspective on the social and ritual significance of axe images.

The Järrestad site, which is situated 5 km inland from the coast, should also be considered in this context. The Järrestad panel encompasses 25 × 20 m and comprises 90 shoe images, 96 foot images, 29 ship images, 6 riders, 3 axes, a couple of spirals, a human figure and c. 700 cupmarks, to mention the most important motifs on this very complex panel (FMIS).



Fig. 13.2. Three palstaves associated with cupmarks and foot images at Järrestad, RAÄ 13. Photo: Catarina Bertilsson. Source SHFA_id 3977.

A recent analysis carried out by the author reveals that there are two phases of use on the panel: the feet, the axes and a limited number of ships seem to belong to an early phase covering Montelius periods I, II and III, while the shoe images, the riders, the spirals and the majority of the ships belong to a later phase covering Montelius periods V and VI and the earliest part of the Pre-Roman Iron Age

(Skoglund 2013).

At the top of the panel are three axes which should be identified as palstaves, and should thus be dated to Montelius period II, 1500–1300 BC. This assumption is based on comparison with metal items and through analogy with other similar axe images (Boye 1896; Nordén 1925–1926; Ling 2013).

The shafts of the three palstaves, which are dated to period II, end either with a knob marked by a cupmark, or in one case it merges into a foot sole which has a cupmark incorporated into the foot. Again, there is an association between a representation of the human body and axes (Fig. 13.2).

However, hidden among the hammered out foot images there may also be axes in another kind of representation. Some of the foot images on this site are very naturalistic, portrayed with a depression marking the feet and with individual toes displayed. Among these is a rare selection of ambiguous images where the foot blade resembles an axe. One of these images is particularly revealing as the toes are separated from the rest of the foot, which in size and style are made into a flanged axe, or possibly a palstave, with the shaft partly displayed (Fig. 13.3).

From this perspective, we gain quite a different understanding of some of the feet displayed on the panel – they are not merely feet. They seem to demonstrate a kind of association between people and axes similar to that at Simrishamn 15 and 23. At Järrestad this association between people and axes is even more intriguing since a part of the human body – the foot – is sometimes portrayed as an axe.



Fig. 13.3. Foot image resembling the outline of an axe at Järrestad, RAÄ 13, Scania. Rubbing: Gerhard Milstreu. Source SHFA_id 672.

South-east Scania – the Late Bronze Age

There is only one major site in south-east Scania that can be attributed to the Late Bronze Age and the earliest Iron Age, c. 900–200 BC, and this is the Järrestad site

(Coles 1999; Skoglund 2013). This panel underwent quite significant changes around 800 BC when it was included in a burial ground. Today this burial ground consists of three mounds 4 m, 10 m and 12 m in diameter, but additional features most probably exist below ground. The mounds have been excavated on two occasions and revealed six burials containing personal ornaments such as dress pins, a button and a neck-ring, dating these features to a later part of period V and the succeeding period VI, c. 800–500 BC (Althin 1945: 81–89; Stjernquist 1961: 79; Hjärthner-Holdar 1993: 130; Söderberg and Hellerström 2003: 50ff).

The inclusion of the panel in a burial ground marks a change not only in the context of the panel, but also in the design of the images. During this later phase images representing individuals with certain characteristics stand out in a more profound way than in the early phase. While the few ships from the Early Bronze Age are empty, there are a number of ships from the late phase that include crews. Moreover, there are six people standing on the backs of horses. However, the most prominent image is a larger human image with a winged sword scabbard attached to the body.



Fig. 13.4. The larger human image at Järrestad, RAÄ 13, Scania with a winged sword scabbard attached to the body. Rubbing: Dietrich Evers. Source: SHFA_id 2350.

Similar images are found in great numbers in the province of Bohuslän in Sweden and in the adjoining province of Østfold in Norway. It is not only the sword scabbard that justifies this parallel but also the athletic appearance of the

body, which strongly resembles examples from western Scandinavia which are involved in exercise and sports.

These kinds of images bear a clear reference to the warrior ideal of Hallstatt C, where similar kinds of scabbards appear (Fig. 13.4). The image therefore post-dates 800 BC and, in a Scandinavian setting, it dates to a later part of period V, c. 800–700 BC (Marstrand 1963; Vogt 2006; Skoglund 2013).

There are also six riders on the panel; as pointed out by Althin, a parallel to these horses is found on Pomeranian face urns, which led him to believe that the riders should be dated to period VI (Althin 1945:78). These kinds of images where the rider is depicted, sometimes partly raised above the horse, occur on various kinds of decorated pottery including face urns, especially from present-day Poland and Hungary during the period in question (Huth 2003: Tafel 29, 30, 39). However, the Järrestad riders are actually standing on their horses, which is a unique feature, and thus the similarities with Pomeranian face urns should not be taken too literally. Another association involves images of people sitting on horses, which in Bohuslän are found in contexts that can be dated to the early Pre-Roman Iron Age (Kaul 2003).

The appearance of the warrior and riders is quite different from the rather stylised human representations carrying axes dating to the earliest Bronze Age. In these Late Bronze Age examples individual skills and qualities are displayed and highlighted as an important component of the images. The larger human figure is often referred to as the 'Dancer' because there is an aura of movement surrounding the athletic body. The riders are depicted actually standing on the horses, controlling them by holding back their heads using bridles. If we take these images literally, they suggest a sophisticated ability in the art of riding, which would have required years of training.

To summarise: the Late Bronze Age images at Järrestad seem to signify skills and positions held by certain individuals in society – something that is strengthened by their association and close spatial relationship with the nearby graves.

Discussion

Rock art and contemporary Early Bronze Age graves in southeast Scania seem to reveal contrasting pictures. Around 1500 BC a variety of older burial traditions were replaced by a new burial tradition which included the construction of larger mounds. In these barrows people were buried in inhumation graves along with personal belongings demonstrating various social roles or different social positions in society (Håkansson 1985; Larsson 1986).

Due to excellent preservation conditions, the well-preserved Danish oak coffin graves from Jutland provide insight into the use of various metal items in the construction of personal identities (Boye 1896), something that has also been explored by various scholars in other parts of southern Scandinavia and northern Germany (Sørensen 1997; 2010; Bergerbrant 2007). A significant change from the earlier period is the construction of a new kind of social identity indicated in the textiles, and a martial identity signified by the sword (Treherne 1996). The first appearance of the sword is in period IB (Vandkilde 1996). However, it is only from Montelius period II that swords occur in larger numbers. The sword was a personal belonging and appears frequently in graves.

This new male martial ideal, where the sword was a central component, did not enter the open air panels in Scania. Given the tradition of depicting the most prominent metal item of the previous period – the flanged axe – in one-to-one size, it is an interesting fact that the socially highly significant sword was not incorporated in the rock art tradition. This is even more intriguing as swords depicted at actual size are found close to Norrköping, which is c. 400 km north of Simrishamn (Nordén 1925–1926; Hauptman Wahlgren 2002).

However, miniature swords appear in Scanian rock art at two sites, though always in a passive way, hanging down from one side of the body. This is true for Kivik, which is a grave context, and at Brantevik, where a miniature sword instead signifies sex in relation to another similarly dressed person, which does not have a sword.

The reluctance to depict swords on the panels is intriguing in the light of a continuous tradition of depicting axes during Montelius period II. The palstaves at Järrestad have been noted above. In addition, palstaves are also found at Gladsax 11 where four palstaves are found together with ships, and finally another plausible palstave is found at Östra Nöbbleöv 6 (FMIS).

The reason for continuing to depict axes in actual size, but not swords or any other kinds of weapons, on the rocks, may be because these two phenomena represented two very different kinds of social encounters. The new martial ideal signified by the sword had its own logic, which in Scania was kept separate from the older tradition of depicting axes on the rocks.

The sword represented a novel and specialised item, designed specifically for the purpose of combat and warfare. It was connected to certain individuals in society and the correct handling of the sword required intense and regular training. In contrast, the axe had a long history going back to the Neolithic. Axes were used for a variety of purposes ranging from cutting down timbers to woodworking, combat and rituals.

This contrast is also reflected in the depositional pattern; axes are mainly deposited at various points in the landscape while swords are usually found in graves with other personal belongings. Helle Vandkilde has interpreted these differences between axes and swords as if they represented various levels of society. Axes were used and managed on a communal level and deposited by a collective; swords were maintained on a personal basis and ended up in graves constructed for certain individuals (Vandkilde 1996).

When the metal items are taken as primary study objects the social values attached to the axe and the sword respectively represent two historical epochs that replace each other, as swords to a large extent outnumbered axes as prestige items during late Montelius period I and the succeeding period II. However, in the case of Scanian rock art it is possible to study these differences from a synchronic, rather than a diachronic, perspective.

Even though swords were used frequently in the construction of personal identities from period II onwards, this is not to say that all social practice was built upon these principles: social interaction built up around more traditional group-oriented values could have persisted in certain contexts. Here it is possible to lean upon the anthropologist Victor Turner who – based on extensive field work – noted a similar contrast, namely the mutual relationship between society and *communitas*. While society is organised by legal, political and economic

institutions, a *communitas* is made up of individuals who, though differing in physical and mental endowment, nevertheless regard themselves as equals in terms of a shared humanity. The *communitas* context is mainly mobilized during certain rituals such as initiation rites.

A characteristic of these kinds of rituals is the fact that various social positions held by people in real life are denied when the younger members of society are taken away to places outside the villages and settlements to learn about the traditions, symbols and rituals of their society (Turner 1969; 1982). Turner observed that this ritual setting – the *communitas* – was characterised by equality between the members – often expressed by nakedness – and the only authority the participants obeyed was that of the elder leaders who were in command of the rituals and ceremonies. In these places the important symbols of society were demonstrated, often in confusing and ambiguous ways to make the initiates think about already known symbols in new ways.

Considering these characteristics in relation to the Early Bronze Age Scanian rock art it is quite possible to imagine the rock art panels to have held a similar function. The lack of images indicating social inequality, the focus on the axe symbol and the rather extraordinary combination of representations of humans with axes would fit well into such a situation.

In conclusion, it seems that the Early Bronze Age open air panels in south-east Scania primarily had an integrative function; they focus on symbols that represented the unity of society, which was very different from everyday life and the different kinds of social positions held by people in society.

The Late Bronze Age Järrestad site represents a very different situation, which does not fit into this explanatory framework. Below, an attempt is made to characterize the rock art tradition in Bohuslän, followed by a discussion of the social significance of the Late Bronze Age tradition.

Northern Bohuslän

In certain respects northern Bohuslän reveals a dramatically different picture compared to that in south-east Scania. This is especially true for the Late Bronze Age when the rock art tradition flourished in Bohuslän.

From Ling's study of the Tanum area it is clear that rock art dating to period I is confined to distinct locations in the landscape and a majority of these have a very close spatial connection with water (Ling 2008: 150). The variations in imagery are limited and consist of ships, circle images, single weapons, bulls and cup marks (Ling 2008: 150, 154). The ship is either empty or crewed with straight, or slightly bent, lines representing people.

During the next phase, which covers period II and III, the number of places with rock art increases significantly. Rock art sites are now also found some distance from the sea even though the maritime setting still dominates (Ling 2008: 150). In these period scenes involving people and weapons occur at some of the sites. When swords appear they are usually attached to the bodies and kept in a scabbard. However, recently this picture has started to change as new finds demonstrate the presence of sword-wielders during Montelius period II in northern Bohuslän (Toreld this volume). Moreover, a significant feature is that these and other similar human images occur outside the ships while ships themselves are either empty, or

crewed by an anonymous group of people made up of single lines.

In comparison to earlier periods profound changes took place in the Late Bronze Age: the number of human images increased and various social roles were now also demonstrated aboard ships. In particular, images dating to period V, 900–700 BC, include representations of humans holding spears and axes, people involved in combat, bodily exercises related to martial activities and the command of crews aboard ships (Bertilsson 1987; Coles 2005; Vogt 2006; Ling 2008: 154).

These changes also involved stylistic changes like experimentation with the scale of the images and a trend towards greater realism in depicting details. In this period there are rare examples of oversized images which naturally had a dominant position in the panels. In parallel there is an interest in details such as the heads of horses on ships that are sometimes very detailed, with not only the head but also the ears clearly identifiable. Taken together these changes indicate that the social context of rock art may have changed, which is discussed in the next section of the paper.

Discussion

The realism in Late Bronze Age imagery and elaborate treatment of the figures may be better understood through the work of Jeffrey M. Hurwit, who introduced the concepts of ‘strong imagery’ and ‘weak imagery’ in his study of ancient Greek art (Hurwit 2011).

According to Hurwit these concepts do not relate to the quality of the image but to concreteness and the inherent potential to evoke the specifics of real life or particular myths rather than universals (Hurwit 2011). A weak image is a standard image, which encompasses most Greek geometric images, from a simple chariot parade to an ordinary row of warriors or dancers. A strong image may be a distinctive treatment of a traditional subject, with details that remove it from the very mass of similar images, or by details suggesting that this specific image refers to the actual experiences of real people, or a specific passage in a mythical understanding of the world. Strong imagery may also be a scene which undoubtedly refers to a mythological narrative, or a scene which lacks counterparts and is unique. According to Hurwit a strong image can meet more than one of these criteria (Hurwit 2011: 14).



Fig. 13.5. A ship with a crew of ten people displaying various obligations aboard the ship. Tanum RAÄ 325, northern Bohuslän. From Ling 2008: 203.

Considering the various and detailed ways of depicting humans in Bohuslän during the Late Bronze Age, it is tempting to try to apply a similar perspective to some of these images.

Among the very many ship depictions displaying organization of people aboard a ship we may choose one recently pointed out by Johan Ling: a ship from Tanum 325 portrays ten individuals aboard a ship; one – the person to the very left positioned at the stern – seems to hold a different rank from the others. It is not only the size of this person that distinguishes him from the others, but also the fact that he is depicted with a phallus and wears a horned helmet. The horned helmet should be seen as a sign of aristocratic rank, and in this specific case the helmet and the phallus are used to indicate the commander of the ship, in contrast to the crew, which only hold paddles in their hands (Fig. 13.5) (Ling 2008: 202–203).

However, there are yet another three persons aboard the ship who do not have paddles in their hands and thereby must be regarded as passengers. They are surrounded by people with oars in their hands, as if they are being guarded by the crew. Could it be that the small size of these people and the lack of gear indicate a hostage situation or the keeping of slaves (cf. Briggs 2002; 2007)? If so, this scene is similar to the ones discussed by Lynn Bevan in this volume.

This picture has details that distinguish it from the majority of ship depictions, indicating that it may refer to an actual experience of real people, or a specific passage in a mythical understanding of the world.



Fig. 13.6. A person of lower rank challenging a person of higher rank? Image from the Vitlycke panel, Tanum RAÄ 1, northern Bohuslän. Photo: Claes Claesson. Source: SHFA_id 561.

This may also be true for other scenes involving details enabling the viewer to differentiate between various kinds of social positions. For example at Vitlycke (Tanum 1:1) there is a larger man furnished with a horned helmet holding a spear in his hand to the right, and to the left is a smaller man without a helmet, also holding a spear; they are standing in opposition to each other as if involved in combat. Given that rank is expressed by a comparative larger size of the body, and in this case also an aristocratic horned helmet, we may be dealing with a person of higher rank being challenged by a person of lower rank (Fig. 13.6).

Using the concepts of weak and strong image we may also label this picture as a strong image. The accurate depictions of details which bear a social significance made it possible for some individuals to identify themselves with selected events displayed on the panels. However, these scenes were surely ambiguous and apart from references to social reality they referred to myths and legends known by contemporary society (Kristiansen 2010; 2011; Melheim 2013). This may be one important aspect of Late Bronze Age rock art – the possibility for certain individuals in society to confirm and empower their social status by relating their experiences from real life to a world of shared myths and legends.

Continuity versus change in Scandinavian rock art

The two cases discussed are illustrative examples of differences in the use of rock art; of course, a key question is the extent to which these observations are relevant to our wider understanding of Scandinavian rock art.

Generally, rock art during the Early Bronze Age was dominated by rather abstract images like circular figures, empty ships or ships with anonymous crews represented by simple lines, foot images, axes and, in a confined area close to Norrköping, swords (Hauptman Wahlgren 2002; Fredell 2003; Ling 2008).

In addition, there were various kinds of human images. Compared with the later part of the Bronze Age these human images are few and they occur in two different kinds of settings; they are present on the open air panels, but they also occur in grave contexts.

An example of an area with human images from the Early Bronze Age is the Norrköping area where images from Montelius period II and III dominate. Here human images occur in rather high numbers in various contexts like processions and hunting scenes. Similarly, at Bohuslän the representations of humans mainly occur outside the ships (Nordén 1925–1926).

Some of the most elaborate scenes including human representations are to be found in grave contexts. Here – in a limited number of cases – human images are parts of compositions with a clear reference to either a social reality or a mythological setting referring to an aristocratic way of living including chariots, mourning processions and hunting. The most prominent examples of this tradition are Kivik, Sagaholm and Klinta, and they can all be attributed to periods II–III, c. 1500–1100 BC (Randsborg 1993; 2011; Goldhahn 1999; Skoglund 2010).

In period IV there seems to be a general decline in the rock art tradition, at least in the Baltic area, judging from the comparatively low number of ship images dating to this period in Uppland (Ling 2013: 86), the Norrköping area (Nordén 1925–1926) and in Scania.

In period V there was a trend towards greater regionalism in rock art traditions. For example at the transition from period V to period VI rock art ceased to be produced in the region of Uppland (Ling 2013), while on the island of Bornholm in the Baltic there is an increase in production of rock art. However, the rock art here was created in an older tradition chiefly focusing on ships with people represented by anonymous crews (Kaul 2005).

The province of Bohuslän and the adjoining province of Østfold took another path, leading towards a new kind of use of the open air panels, where they seem to have fulfilled the needs of certain groups in society. This shift in emphasis from a focus on empty ships or ships with crews represented by lines, towards elaborate scenes involving humans taking part in various activities, indicates a shift in function of these sites during Montelius period V, 900–700 BC (Vogt 2006; Ling 2008).

The recurrent use of the ship image for one and a half millennia – from c. 1700–200 BC – has led to an overall emphasis on a continuous and repeating tradition in Scandinavian rock art. However, the continuous use of similar kinds of symbols for a very long time does not necessarily mean that the same kind of meaning was attached to them.

The oldest ship image that can be accurately dated by typological methods is found on a curved sword from Rørby in Denmark which is dated to around 1600 BC. Likewise, in rock carvings, the crew on the ship are drawn as diagonal lines. There are 31 lines and the heads are marked by small dots. The unequal number of people indicates that we are dealing with 15 pairs of paddlers and an additional person in charge of the ship. Importantly all people are depicted in the same size

and none differs from the others (Kaul 1998: 73).

This way of depicting people aboard ship is common in the Early Bronze Age and can be found on the open air panels of, for example, Scania, Uppland and Bohuslän and southwest Norway. According to Johan Ling's study of ship images in northern Bohuslän there were strict rules governing the number of people depicted aboard ships during the whole Bronze Age, and the average number of humans aboard ships was 7–13 people; it is first at the transition to the Iron Age that there was a shift towards smaller crews (Ling 2008: 191–197; 2012).

During Montelius period V this way of depicting people aboard ships in certain regions was complemented by another way of representing people, namely as different social individuals with different kinds of tasks aboard ships.

The continuous use of the ship as an important metaphor may be because the ship could be used in two distinct social strategies. One of these is the ship as a metaphor for a group of equal people working together to propel a ship, while the other is the ship as a metaphor of an unequal society, where a crew is made up of one or two people in command of the ship and a larger subordinate group propelling the ship (Skoglund 2008).

In conclusion, generally speaking rock art in the Early Bronze Age had an integrative function in society while from Montelius period V and later there was a greater regionalism, and in some areas like Bohuslän and Østfold rock art took on a slightly different function as a vehicle for certain groups in society to manifest their social ambitions.

The idea of representing humans in art

Even though illustrative art is a world-wide phenomenon, there are periods and cultures where art lacks any correlation to the real-world, and is made totally abstract and non-figurative. Ancient Greece provides a clarifying example of how abstract and representative art may dominate in different historical epochs. In Mycenaean Greece craftspeople frequently decorated vases with animals and human figures, but in the twelfth century BC this tradition ceased, and an imageless period ensued. During the subsequent centuries no representative art was produced, and the idea of making figures like humans and animals on vases was discarded as the craftsmanship related to the aristocracy ceased when the palace economies collapsed.

At the end of the ninth century this situation slowly changed with the appearance of a few and indistinct examples of figurative art. From around 800 BC there is a clear increase in figurative art, including the representation of humans and animals, often composed into various scenes like funeral processions, battles and duels (Hurwit 1985: 53–70).

There are many ideas as to why this change happened; one answer is that it was caused by a change in society where the images reflected values and norms held by a new kind of elite. Images like horses and mourners were symbols of status made to leave an impression upon the lesser members of society (Hurwit 1985: 69).

Similar changes are also reflected in the Hallstatt cultures of Central Europe at the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age, c. 800 BC. While human representations are almost absent in the Urnfield cultures, this changed at the

onset of the Iron Age as humans were introduced in art. This was a result of intensified contacts between central Europe and the Mediterranean, and is to be seen both through the existence of imported objects, and in the translation of Mediterranean themes on the 'situla art'.

In the 'situla art' we find images arranged into narratives displaying wedding scenes, boxing scenes, ploughing scenes, military parades and feasting. While on a general level similarities exist between these expressions and the Greek art, it is also obvious that a translation took place where the meaning of images changed as they were re-contextualised (Lucke 1962; Teržan 2001; Zimmerman 2003).

In the north-eastern Hallstatt area 'situla art' is not as well represented, and the representations of humans take on a different form as human images are mainly found on pottery made for burials. The whole pot might be shaped as a sculpted face and in addition other human images may appear on the 'body' where figures and hunting scenes, or objects like wagons and weapons, occur (Kneisel 2005).

In Scandinavia the situation is different as there was a strong figurative tradition throughout the Bronze Age, exemplified first and foremost by the ship which is the central emblem of the Scandinavian Bronze Age. From the very onset of the Bronze Age c. 1700 BC and for the next 1500 years ships were reproduced in large numbers on rock art, on metal items and in the shape of stone ships used for burials.

Concentrating on the human images it is clear that these were not created with the same kind of frequency over time. From a very detailed study of the Kalleby area in northern Bohuslän, Åsa Fredell provides some interesting numbers concerning the number of human figures made during each of Montelius' six periods. In period I there were no human figures made in this area; 13 figures date to period II, 3 figures date to period III, 19 figures date to period IV, 215 figures date to period V, and 58 figures date to period VI, while only 4 figures may be dated to the Pre-Roman Iron Age (Fredell n.d.).

Thus only a limited number of human images were made before period V, while there is a distinct boom in the making of human figures during this period, which in calibrated years is equal to the period c. 900–700 BC. This increase in the making of human images is also supported by studies covering a larger part of northern Bohuslän (Ling 2008). This is not only a quantitative change as the number of humans on the panels increase, but it is also a qualitative change as the ways humans are represented is transformed.

During this period representations of humans often refer to various social roles held by an aristocracy. This pictorial manifestation of a new kind of aristocracy is a general European phenomenon occurring around 800 BC. If we seek to find the sources that had a direct impact on Scandinavian rock art we should turn our interest to the Hallstatt culture, as these influences are evident in many different ways in the Scandinavian rock art tradition from around 800 BC. First and foremost, the Hallstatt influences are expressed by the typical winged sword scabbard, which appears in large numbers on the rock art of Bohuslän in Sweden, and in the adjoining province of Østfold in Norway, and in limited numbers in other areas (Vogt 2006; Ling 2008).

However, there also seem to be similarities in the composition of the motifs on the rock art in Bohuslän and contemporary situla art. Since the nineteenth century there has been a recurrent discussion on some very specific themes in the rock art

which include wedding scenes and plough scenes. These also occur on Hallstatt situla art, sometimes in connection to each other, and they have been interpreted as a metaphor for fertility and fecundity in the iconographic programme of situla art (Teržan 2001), or as an expression of an aristocratic lifestyle where the line between humans and gods is blurred (Huth 2003).

Given that there was a distinct trend towards an increased use of figurative art, and especially the use of human representations from around 800 BC, in the Mediterranean, in Central Europe and in Scandinavia, these phenomena should be seen as interrelated. A common denominator seems to be the occurrence of a new kind of aristocracy which around this time in various parts of Europe started to use representations of humans in art as a way to manifest themselves and the values that were important for them to maintain their elevated position in society.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that the use of human images in Scandinavian rock art changed through time. By using evidence from the Early Bronze Age in south-east Scania it was suggested that rock art primarily had an integrative function in rituals where the axe was a kind of emblem or symbol representing the unity of society.

The evidence from Late Bronze Age northern Bohuslän points in another direction: here rock art was used by subgroups of society to reinforce their specific social identity. Rock art was also used in social competition where one probable function of the images was to bridge the gap between the real world and mythology, and to enable certain people to justify their elevated social positions by reference to legends and myths.

When trying to understand this change in the use of rock art, c. 800 BC is a significant turning point. Around this time in various parts of Europe a new kind of aristocracy emerged which reinvented the tradition of using representations of humans in art to manifest aristocratic ideals.

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Sword-wielders and manslaughter. Recently discovered images on the rock carvings of Brastad, western Sweden

Andreas Toreld

New discoveries of spectacular rock art images were made during fieldwork in Brastad parish, Bohuslän. One valley revealed a particularly large number of violent motifs. Of special interest is a killing scene and human figures that are indisputably wielding swords. These images were probably pecked into the rock during the Bronze Age periods II–III, i.e. 1500–1100 BC. In the past few years we have had plenty of clear evidence that this was not a peaceful era. The discovery of the killing scene provides new scope for interpretation, specifically that scenes with figures engaged in combat might be accounts of real conflicts.

KEYWORDS: Brastad, Bohuslän, Sweden, rock carving, Bronze Age, sword, violence, combat, manslaughter, sword-wielder

Introduction

The parish of Brastad in Bohuslän, on the west coast of Sweden, has long been known as an area with an abundance of interesting rock art from the Scandinavian Bronze Age (1700–500 BC). Today, there are 160 known rock carving sites in the parish; several of these are large and rich in images. The first depiction of the rock carving site known as *The Shoemaker of Backa, Brastad*, was made as early as 1627 by the Norwegian senior lecturer Peder Alfsön. The first depictions of the rock carvings of Brastad used for research were made during the first half of the nineteenth century (Åberg 1839; Holmberg 1848). Today many scholars base their research on depictions from the 1870s made by the Danish illustrator Lauritz Baltzer; these were published in a magnificent volume of prints (Baltzer 1881–1890).

A new and more comprehensive record of the rock art in Brastad was essential.

Taking on this commission from *Stiftelsen för dokumentation av Bohusläns hällristningar* (*The Foundation for the Documentation of Rock Carvings in Bohuslän*), the expectations of the author and his colleague Tommy Andersson were high. Through donations, this Foundation has enabled fieldwork in Bohuslän since 1996; a photographic and pictorial record has been achieved for over 1600 rock carving sites. These pictures are accessible on the website of the Foundation (www.hallristning.se).

The main part of the fieldwork in the parish of Brastad was carried out in 2009–2010. In several cases, the documentation of Baltzer was substantially modified. When the source material was re-examined (Toreld in press), this resulted in the questioning of previous interpretations of certain images as expressions of religious rituals (for instance Almgren 1927; Kaul 1998; 2004). A further outcome of the fieldwork was that several newly found sites were discovered, as well as previously unknown images at known sites. A few of these newly discovered images will be the subject of this article.

A valley of violence

The rock art of Bohuslän is well known for its lively scenes. Human figures are seen in action in various contexts. Many are warriors carrying weapons and various forms of armour. In their hands they hold axes, spears, bows and arrows, as well as shields, although the most common weapon is the sword. According to Mats P. Malmer, 40% of the human figures in Bohuslän carry swords (Malmer 1981: table 24; 1989: 22). However, the swords are never drawn, but are always sheathed, hanging by their sides; this has been observed by several scholars (Malmer 1981: 78; 1989: 22; Coles 1990: 32; Harding 2007: 117; Ling 2008: 203). Malmer writes, 'For the interpretation of these figures it is no doubt important to note that men are never represented with drawn swords in their hands' (1981: 78). Attention has also been called to the fact that although the men point their axes and spears at each other, they are never seen to injure or kill each other (Nordbladh 1989: 327; Coles 1990: 34; Bengtsson 1999: 22; Harding 2007: 116–117). This lack of depictions of drawn swords and combat resulting in death is not only the case in the rock art of Bohuslän, but in the whole of northern Europe.



Fig. 14.1. (Left) The killing scene on the recently discovered rock carving site Brastad 617, panel B. (Right) Sword-wielder on the site Brastad 617, panel C (photo: Andreas Toreld).

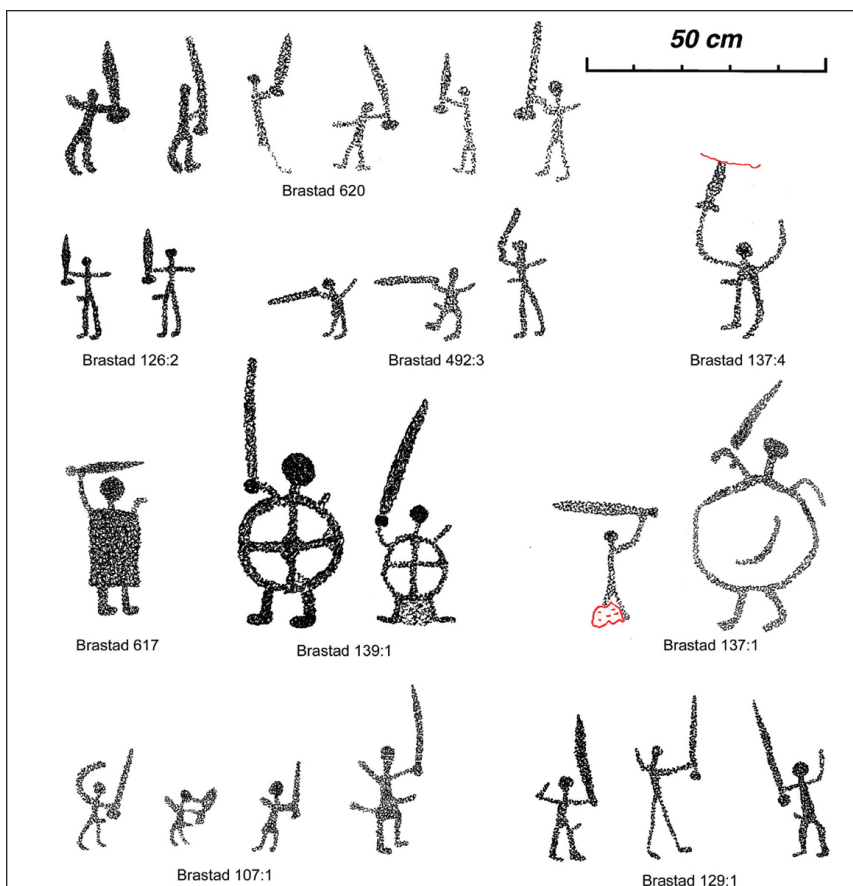


Fig. 14.2. List of the 24 recently discovered sword-wielders from the area around Medbo in Brastad parish.

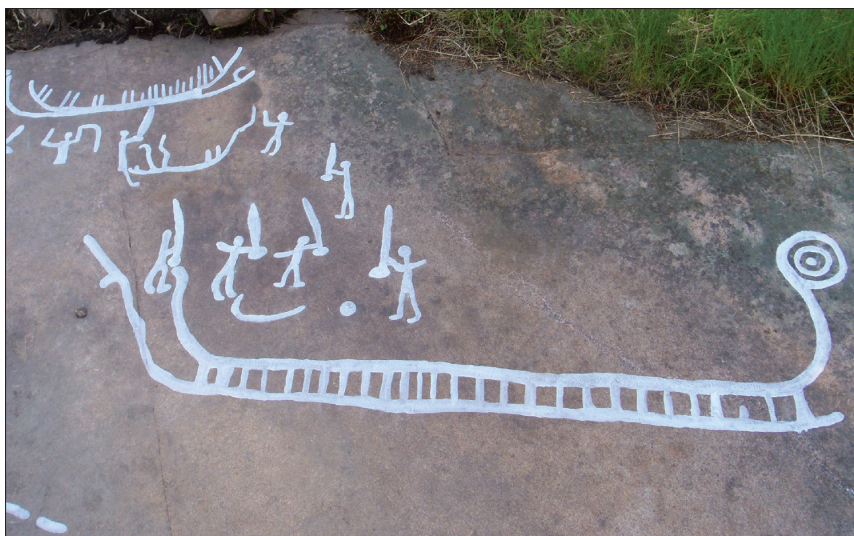


Fig. 14.3. Are these people, who are armed with swords, engaged in combat? The human figures are carved in the same style, which suggests that they are contemporary. The ships were probably added on different occasions. Section of the recently discovered rock carving site Brastad 620, panel A (photo: Andreas Toreld).



Fig. 14.4. Recently discovered sword-wielders and archers on the site Brastad 126:2 (photo: Andreas Toreld).

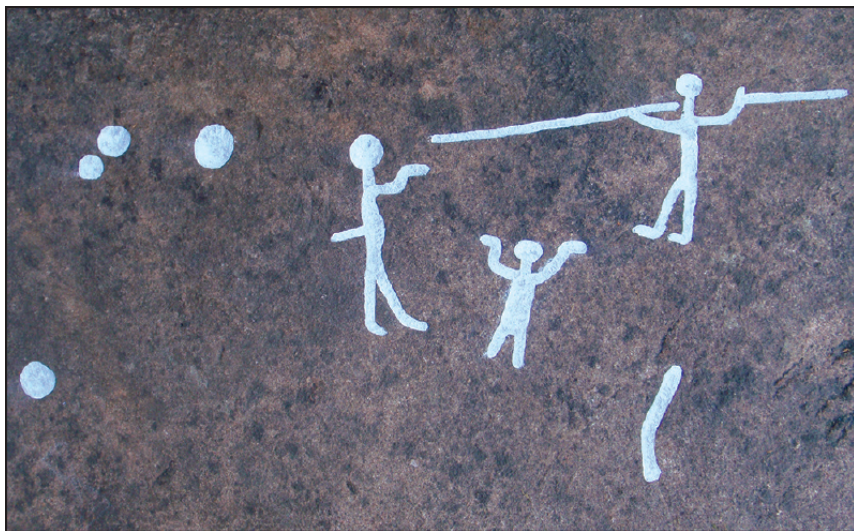


Fig. 14.5. Threats of violence. The recently discovered site Brastad 620, panel B. The spear is somewhat incomplete due to weathering of the rock (photo: Andreas Toreld).

One of the newly found rock carving sites in Brastad changed both these established facts in one blow. On a surface of rock 16×5 m in size, in a private garden, we discovered a scene with a human figure thrusting a spear with both hands into the chest of an antagonist. Another human figure further down on the same rock was clearly holding a sword up in the air (Fig. 14.1). Furthermore, when we were finished with our work in this confined valley, in the neighbourhood of Medbo in Brastad parish, we could tally up no less than 24 human figures with lifted swords, distributed over nine rock carving sites (Fig. 14.2). I have settled on the term 'sword-wielder' (*svärdslyftare*) for this new category of image.

At one of the newly found sites, we see a group of people standing facing each other; at least six of them are holding up swords in front of them (Fig. 14.3). If these figures are intended to be included in the same composition, it is logical to believe that they are engaged in combat with each other. By studying damage and re-sharpening of cutting edges of bronze swords, Kristian Kristiansen (1983; 1984; 2002) has shown that the swords were actually used in combat; they were not just for ceremonial use, as some scholars have claimed. On another of the rocks where there are two sword-wielders, there are also two archers aiming at one another (Fig. 14.4). The scene with the archers is not unique in itself, but it reinforces the impression of the rock art in this valley as unusually violent. Another example of a violent situation is a scene in which a human figure with a sheathed sword at his side is threatened by a figure holding a spear, while a third figure seems to intervene and ward off the attack (Fig. 14.5).

The killing

The scene showing a human figure killing another with a spear is unique for

northern Europe. It constitutes a concrete illustration of direct violence. The victim holds a raised weapon and is attacked and speared in the chest by an opponent. The raised weapon looks like a simple bludgeon. In this case, it is less likely that it is a sword since the upper part of the weapon is wider and there is no pommel implying the hilt of a sword. Bludgeons are not known in the archaeological material of the Scandinavian Bronze Age. That does not mean that they did not occur. Their absence could be explained by the fact that they were made entirely of wood, as many ethnographically known clubs are. Therefore, they would not survive or be as well preserved as bronze weapons (Osgood 2010: 25). Recently, in Tollense Valley, northeastern Germany, two wooden clubs were found in a context that appears to be the remains of a great battle with more than one hundred killed individuals. This battle probably occurred around 1230 cal BC (Jantzen *et al.* 2011). The weapon of the killer was clearly a twohanded spear. These figures lacked the usual features such as a phallus and scabbard. The simple design of the figures and the lack of prestige weapons support my conclusion that this is a depiction of an actual conflict resulting in death. In my opinion, no part of the scene signifies that the conflict could be regarded as ritual or ceremonial in the way other combat scenes have been explained (see Nordbladh 1989: 331; Bengtsson 1999: 22; Harding 2007: 115–118).

Skeletal trauma shows that a common cause of death among those who were killed during the Bronze Age in northern Europe was from being struck by a spear. The victims have been found in ordinary graves, as well as in mass graves, in which entire families seem to have been murdered (Fyllingen 2003; 2005; 2006; Osgood 2010). In a mass grave discovered at Sund in Nord-Trøndelag in Norway, the bones of at least 22 individuals were found, of which half of them were children under the age of 15 years. Several of the skeletons have injuries from earlier violence, which they had survived. For instance, there was a middle-aged man whose lower back had been crushed by a hard blow of a club, but he survived and lived another ten years. He was later killed by two stabs of a spear through the groin. The Norwegian mass grave was dated to around 1400 BC (Fyllingen 2003). The killing scene in Brastad can probably be dated to around the same period. The image as such, with its simple design, is difficult to date. However, it seems reasonable that the killing scene is contemporary with the other images on the limited surface of rock (Brastad 617, panel B). These appear to have been made sometime during periods II–III of the Bronze Age, i.e. 1500–1100 BC (Fig. 14.6).

The sword-wielders

As far as I know, the sword-wielders in Brastad are the first images to be discovered in northern Europe in which we can see clear depictions of swords in the hands of human figures. However, this motif is well known among the rock carvings of Valcamonica in northern Italy. Even duelling with swords occurs in this rock art, usually dated to the Italian Iron Age (850–16 BC) (Anati 1987; 1994). In the north of Norway, at Apana Gård in Alta, there is also a rock carving interpreted as a combat scene between two men armed with swords (Helskog 1988: 87). The alleged swords in Alta should, however, be regarded as uncertain since they are depicted as straight lines, without any indication of a pommel or a narrowing point of a sword. The same applies to the alleged swords held in the

hands of two human figures, shown on eighteenth century depictions of rock carvings on a stone slab (no. 8) in the cairn of Kivik in Scania (Randsborg 1993). Today, only fragments of this stone slab exist and it is no longer possible to determine whether figures wielding swords occurred on it. In any case, it is obvious that a figure wielding a sword does not exist on the stone slab no. 7, as shown on some early depictions – the figure does not even have arms. There are several examples in Bohuslän of straight lines extending from the hands of human figures. These might represent swords, but this would be difficult to prove. Furthermore, I am slightly doubtful about including the three figures from Brastad 492:3 in the compilation (Fig. 14.2). In this case, it is the context of the figures and the way they hold their swords, not the morphology of the swords, that has led to including them amongst the group of sword-wielders.

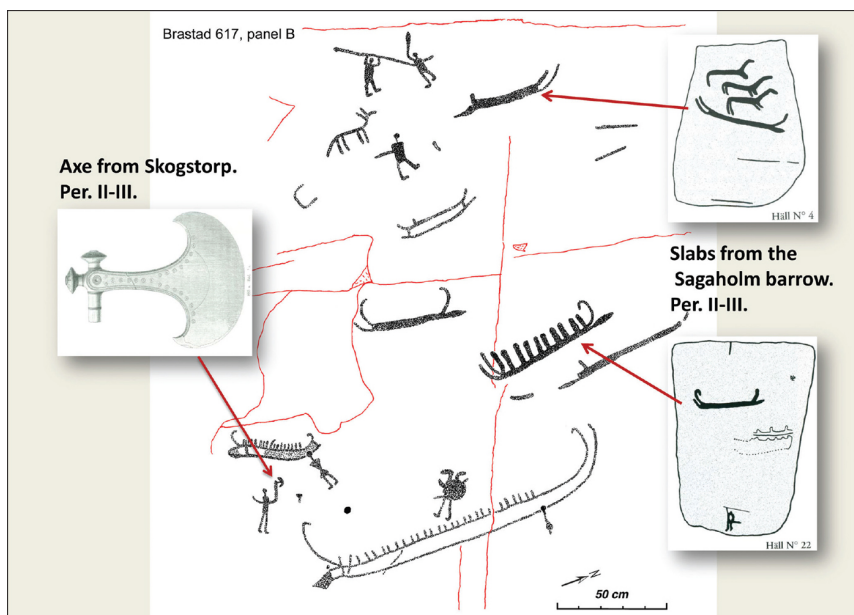


Fig. 14.6. Panel B within the newly discovered rock carving Brastad 617 was probably carved during period II or III of the Bronze Age. The dating of the ships is also supported by the chronologies established by Kaul (1998) and Ling (2008). The axe from Skogstorp, after Montelius 1917. The slabs of rock in the Sagaholm barrow, after Goldhahn 1999. The rock carvings were discovered and documented by Andreas Toreld and Tommy Andersson.

An often discussed question is how these bronze swords would have been used with such short hilts. It has been suggested that they were not intended for practical use, or that they could only be used for stabbing. Kristiansen's studies of damage along the cutting edges of the swords shows that they were also weapons used for slashing. He claims that a grip around the shoulders of the hilt would make it easier to control the movement of the heavy bronze sword; thereby, it could be used as a weapon for both slashing and thrusting (2002: 320; cf. Harding 2007). For the first time, we now have proof in pictures of how the swords were

held and used. Most of the images show human figures holding the swords up in front of them, but we also see them thrusting their sword, using it as a pointed weapon (Brastad 492:3), or brandishing it above their heads in the act of using the cutting edge of the weapon (Brastad 137:1 and 617).

An observation worth noting is that only one (Brastad 107:1) of the 24 figures wielding swords wears a scabbard by his side. Moreover, the single scabbard must be regarded as rather doubtful, since it does not hang down as it usually would; if anything, it points upwards. The absence of scabbards is quite remarkable considering the account mentioned above that 40% of the human figures on the rocks of Bohuslän wear scabbards. A reasonable explanation might be that the main point to be shown is the armour and that this is not an exact representation. The artist has not considered it necessary to portray the scabbard, since the picture already clearly shows that the person is armed with a sword. Ten of the sword-wielders, or 42%, have a phallus. This is a proportion very close to the average calculated by Malmer, which was 43% of all human figures on the rocks of Bohuslän (1981: table 24).

The design of both the swords and the human figures holding them varies. The bodies are either pecked in one line, or entirely pecked out, or made up of a circle. The circle-shaped bodies, with or without a cross, might illustrate shields (see Ling and Cornell 2010: fig. 5). The entirely pecked out rectangular body on the rock carving site Brastad 617 probably does not represent a rectangular shield; the first evidence of rectangular shields appears during the Iron Age. More likely, it is clothes that are illustrated, such as a tunic or perhaps a jerkin. There are no signs in the technique used to make the engravings or in the design of them, indicating that the same artist made all the images. On the other hand, since these motifs only occur in this limited valley, it is probable that the artists knew each other, or at least knew about previously carved figures wielding swords. Seemingly, the artists have inspired each other to make similar motifs. The geographical distribution of the motif illuminates the area in which these people dwelt. If we assume that the rock carvings were made near to where people lived, a specific motif such as the sword-wielders might act as an indicator of the size of the local territory (Toreld in manuscript).

The dating of the sword-wielders

The most obvious way of dating the sword-wielders would be if we could determine the type of swords that they are holding. However, this is not entirely straightforward; one reason is that the miniature size of the swords limits the representation of distinct details. The case is completely different for the sword depicted in natural size, which were found on the rock carving site Lyse 70:1 during fieldwork in the neighbouring parish (Fig. 14.7). The length of the sword is 75 cm, although it had originally been somewhat longer as the point continued into an eroded part of the rock. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that it depicts a type of sword with a blade of uniform width and with a cruciform hilt: a horn-pommelled sword (*Hörnerknaufschwert*). This type of sword is typical for period IV of the Bronze Age (1100–900 BC). It should be regarded as exclusive, since only four finds of this type of bronze sword have been discovered in Sweden (Baudou 1960: 10). On the rock carving, the sword is surrounded by ships and there are

ships partially superimposed over it. In Bohuslän, this is the first known sword represented in natural size, which without a doubt can be dated to the Bronze Age; as such, this find is vital for the debate on dating rock art. Swords depicted in their actual size are otherwise mainly found in Östergötland. At an early stage, these swords made it possible to date the South Scandinavian rock carvings to the Bronze Age (Hildebrand 1869). The swords from Östergötland depict full-hilted swords dated to periods II–III. Similar to the sword from Lyse, they are always completely pecked out, placed in a horizontal position and never in the hands of a human figure.

Among the sword-wielders in Brastad, both short and long swords occur. Various shapes of pommels are represented; the oval, or near round pommel, is the most common form. The pommel is most likely intended to be seen from behind, whereas the blade is shown from the side. This kind of clarifying perspective is common in rock art; things are depicted from several angles at the same time in order to make the shape clear. A value perspective is also common, in which significant features are depicted in a larger size. That is why some of the swords appear to be longer than the figure wielding it.

In many ways, the sword that is held up on the rock carving Brastad 617 resembles the Scandinavian full-hilted swords with blades that are widest towards the middle (Fig. 14.8). These occur with an oval pommel during period II; during period III, they have a somewhat rhombus-shaped pommel. The full-hilted swords vary greatly in length, from daggers and short swords to quite long specimens. A particularly long sword, as long as 101.5 cm in length, was found in the sea outside Ellös, situated 20 km to the south of Brastad (Montelius 1917: no. 1003). Other swords, such as the ones depicted on the rock carving Brastad 126:2, may just as well represent imported swords of the Mörigen type, dated to period V (900–700 BC). On many types of bronze swords, for instance on the flange-hilted swords, the pommel is missing because it was made of organic material; this makes it difficult to compare the bronze swords with the depicted ones. Alternative dating methods should be explored, however, because of the uncertainty as to how reliable the miniature depictions really are.

None of the sword-wielders have the features that are characteristic for the warriors of the Late Bronze Age, such as enlarged calves of their legs, large hands, horned helmets, belts and scabbards with a chape, etc. The lack of these features does not date the rock carvings, but the fact that none of the 24 sword-wielders have any of these features leads me to consider a dating to the Early Bronze Age as most likely. It should be noted that there are several warriors with these features in the same valley, but never on the same panels as the sword-wielders. Furthermore, the warriors that were carved during the Late Bronze Age were often pictured in a larger size than the sword-wielders.

In one case, a ship was superimposed over one of the sword-wielders (Fig. 14.9). According to current chronologies of ships (Kaul 1998; Ling 2008), the ship should be dated to the Bronze Age periods II–III. Thus, the underlying sword-wielder could not have been made later than period III. Most of the sword-wielders are surrounded by ships that are typical for the early Bronze Age. Two sites deviate from this pattern. On the rock carving Brastad 126:2 (Fig. 14.4) and Brastad 620 (Fig. 14.3) there are ships with spiral-shaped bow stems and raised keel extensions, which dates them to the Late Bronze Age, probably period V (Kaul

1998; Ling 2008). The lowest rock carving site, Brastad 137:1, is situated at a level of 13.2 m above the current sea-level. Considering what we know about the shore displacement of the area (Ling 2008), the site would have been situated on the shore, just by the sea, during period II and could not have been made before this period. This location would then have been a suitable place for a harbour.

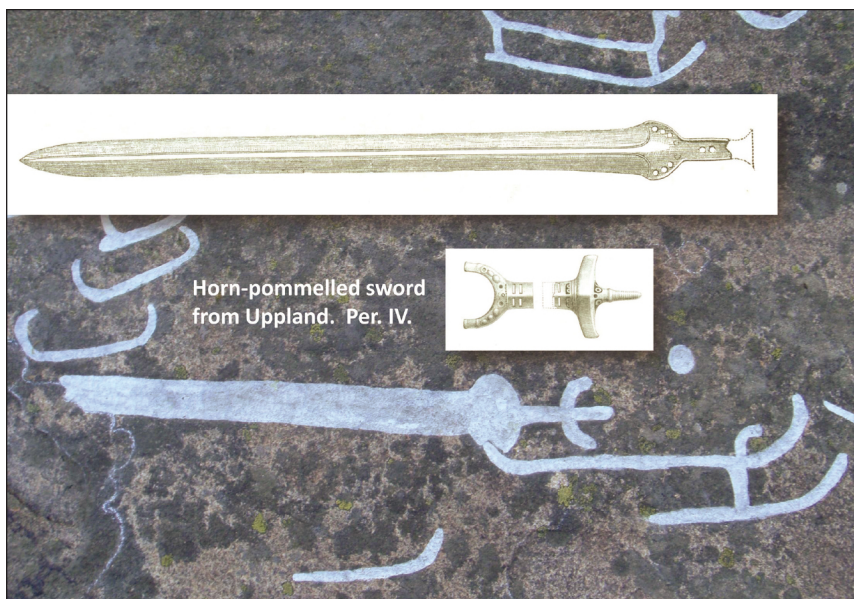


Fig. 14.7. A section of the rock carving Lyse 70:1, with a recently discovered full-scale sword. The blade is uniform in width and has a cruciform hilt. The type dates from period IV. Bronze sword from Uppland, after Montelius 1917 (photo: Andreas Toreld).



Full-hilted
sword .
Per. II.



Fig. 14.8. The sword on the rock carving Brastad 617 resembles a Scandinavian full-hilted sword. The pommel is most likely intended to be seen from behind. The accompanying bronze sword was found in a bog in Västergötland and dates from period II. Bronze sword, after Montelius 1917 (photo: Andreas Toreld).



Fig. 14.9. One of the two sword-wielders is superimposed by a ship dated to periods II–III. This demonstrates that the underlying sword-wielder could not have been made later than period III. Section of rock carving Brastad 107:1 (photo: Andreas Toreld).

Discussion

After the First and Second World Wars few scholars were interested in studying prehistoric war. People seemed to be fed up with war. The concept of the Bronze Age as a time of peace with a focus on religious issues was more appealing. Studies on violence and warfare were not on the archaeological agenda until the mid-1990s (Vandkilde 2006). In recent years we have seen tangible evidence in the skeletal material that war was often present during the Bronze Age in Northern Europe (Fyllingen 2003; 2005; 2006; Goldhahn 2009; Lindström 2009; Osgood

2010; Jantzen *et al.* 2011). It has also been pointed out that the increasing antagonism in society ought to be possible to distinguish in the form of rock art showing armed men and men in combat. 'It is not a cosy, nice and ordered life in the realm of a perfect "cosmology" or "ontology". It is about crude violence; it is a threat, emerging from the stone' (Ling and Cornell 2010: 38). In my opinion, the recently found killing scene is evidence that the artists did not refrain from portraying real situations of deadly violence. This find enables us to put forward interpretations of other violent scenes as representations of real conflicts with battles for life or death. These scenes are especially numerous in the neighbourhood of Medbo (Figs 14.3–14.5). We may particularly note that here scenes depict the use of high status weapons such as swords, but also simpler weapons like spears and bludgeons, as well as bows and arrows.

However, combat scenes are unevenly distributed in the landscape. On the rock carvings of Backa, situated nearby in the same parish, combat scenes do not occur at all, even if armed men are present. In the parishes of Tanum and Kville, which are rich in rock art, depictions of conflicts are quite common (for instance the sites Tanum 1, 12, 25, 29, 51, 72, 158, 192, 255, 319, 353, 365 and Kville 74, 124, 125, 157, 216). In these cases, the weapons pointed against the opponents are spears and axes, along with bows and arrows. In several cases, the weapons are held very close, but not touching the body of the opponent. The reason for not placing the weapon in the body might be that this was a way of showing the weapon in its entirety (Fig. 14.10). On the other hand, there is at least one example of a spear being stabbed into a body (Fig. 14.11). In Tanum and Kville, depictions of armed men are dated to the period from the Bronze Age period II until the Pre Roman Iron Age (Ling 2012; cf. Vogt 2012: 71–84).



Fig. 14.10 The border fight at Vitlycke. It has previously been claimed that combat scenes only represent ritual or ceremonial battles, or battles between divine beings. But, could it in fact be a real conflict situation that is depicted here? Section of rock carving Tanum 1:1 (photo: Andreas Toreld).

I consider it most likely that all the sword-wielders of Medbo, as well as the killing scene, were made sometime during the course of periods II–III of the Bronze Age. The main uncertainty relates to the sword-wielders of Brastad 126:2 and 620. These are surrounded by ships of a type dated to a later period, which means that

they might be dated to period V. A dating to periods II–III is entirely in line with several contemporary full-scale depictions of swords in Östergötland. It is also a fact that most of the bronze swords found in Sweden are dated to period II (Larsson 1986). Having been introduced in period I, the swords spread widely during period II, when there was also considerable local production of the weapons. This was the first weapon that was developed only for use against other humans. From this point on, the sword came to be the prime symbol of a warrior.



Fig. 14.11. Speared from behind. The spear-man was added after the axe-man, but one cannot tell

if there is an hour or a century in between. Even if the scene was not created on one occasion it could hardly be a coincidence that the smaller warrior thrusts his spear into the back of the great warrior. Section of rock carving Tanum 319:1 (photo: Andreas Toreld).

Considering the strong symbolic value of the sword, it is remarkable that we do not see it depicted more often in rock art. Only in the neighbourhood of Medbo, in the parish of Brastad, do the human figures hold their swords up in the air with the same explicit pride as other human figures brandish other types of weapons. Why do they unsheathe their swords only in this confined valley? Was the population of this area particularly belligerent and fascinated by weapons? Perhaps they were a group of people who made a living as professional warriors, in the same way as Hilde Fyllingen (2003) suggests that the individuals in the mass grave of Sund did. Or maybe they imported and distributed bronze swords, or perhaps even manufactured the swords themselves. We can only speculate on these matters. No archaeological excavations of contemporary settlement sites or graves have been conducted in this area, which might have been, or may yet prove to be, informative.

The strange thing is not the situation that we see figures wielding swords in Medbo, but that we do not see them in other places. It might be that the straight lines extending from the hands of other human figures are intended to represent swords and that only in Medbo are there details that, with certainty, enable us to identify them as swords. The bedrock in the area is of a particularly high quality. It is dense and hard granite, well suited for pecking details and for ensuring their preservation to the present day. However, in Brastad, and not least in Tanum, many details of the weapons of warriors dated to the Late Bronze Age can be seen. For instance, some wear scabbards with detailed chapes, but we do not see them with swords in their hands. We may presume that in the Late Bronze Age it was no longer as important to show off the sword in its entirety as it was during the Early Bronze Age, when the sword was still a novelty. Another explanation may be that a sheathed sword hanging in a scabbard could not be misunderstood, and at the same time the hands of the warrior were free to hold other weapons. Scabbards are used in the scenes to mark the gender and social status of the human figures, who for the moment are not engaged in violence. In a similarly plain and efficient way, scabbards worn by the figures might have indicated that the person in question was a free man with a right to bear weapons.

Finally, most of the figures wielding swords that we discovered occurred on previously known rock carving sites. The fact that nobody had observed the swords belonging to the human figures implies that it is entirely possible that unidentified sword-wielders also occur on other sites. Perhaps more sword-wielders will be discovered in the future, now that we know that they exist.

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